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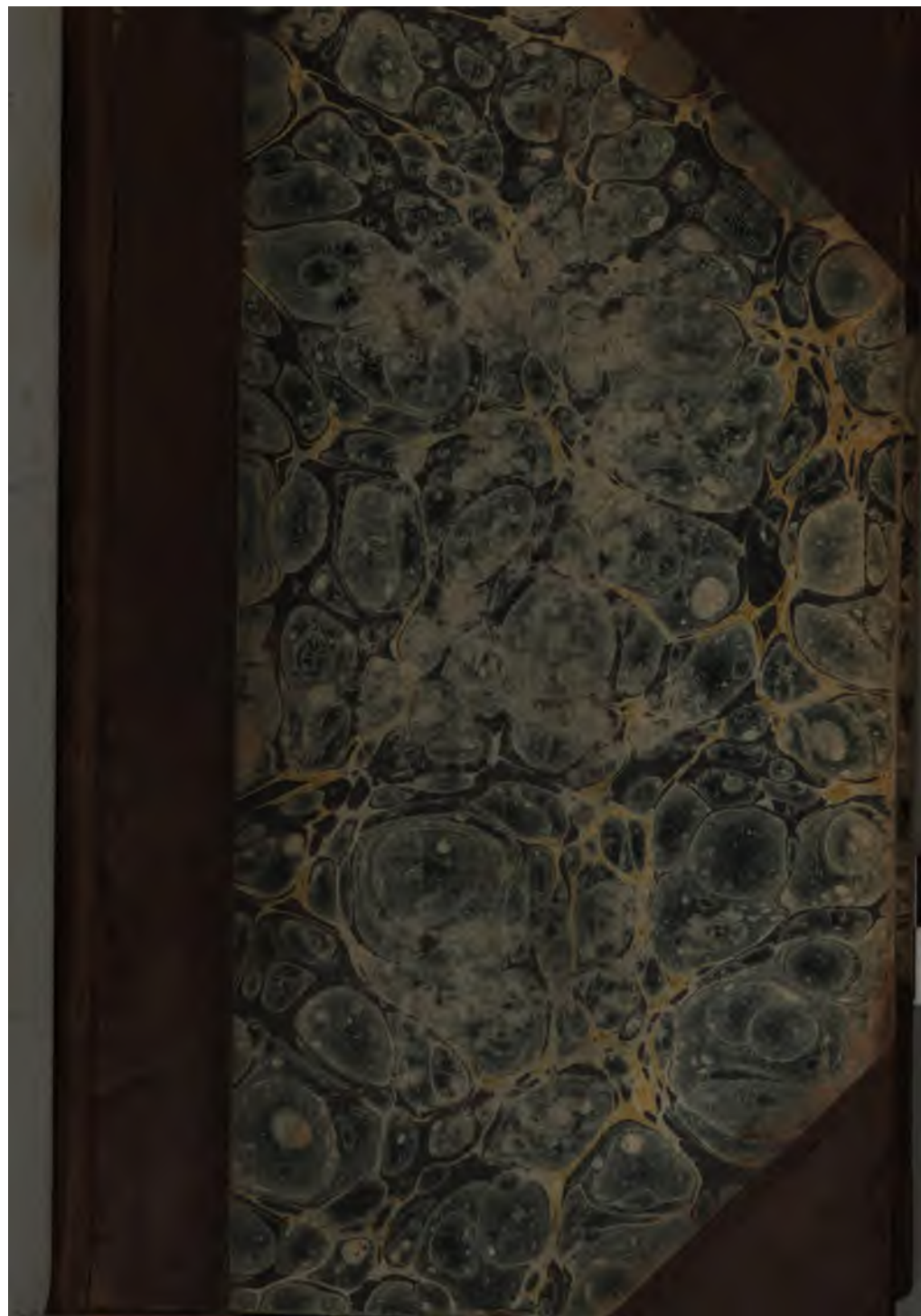
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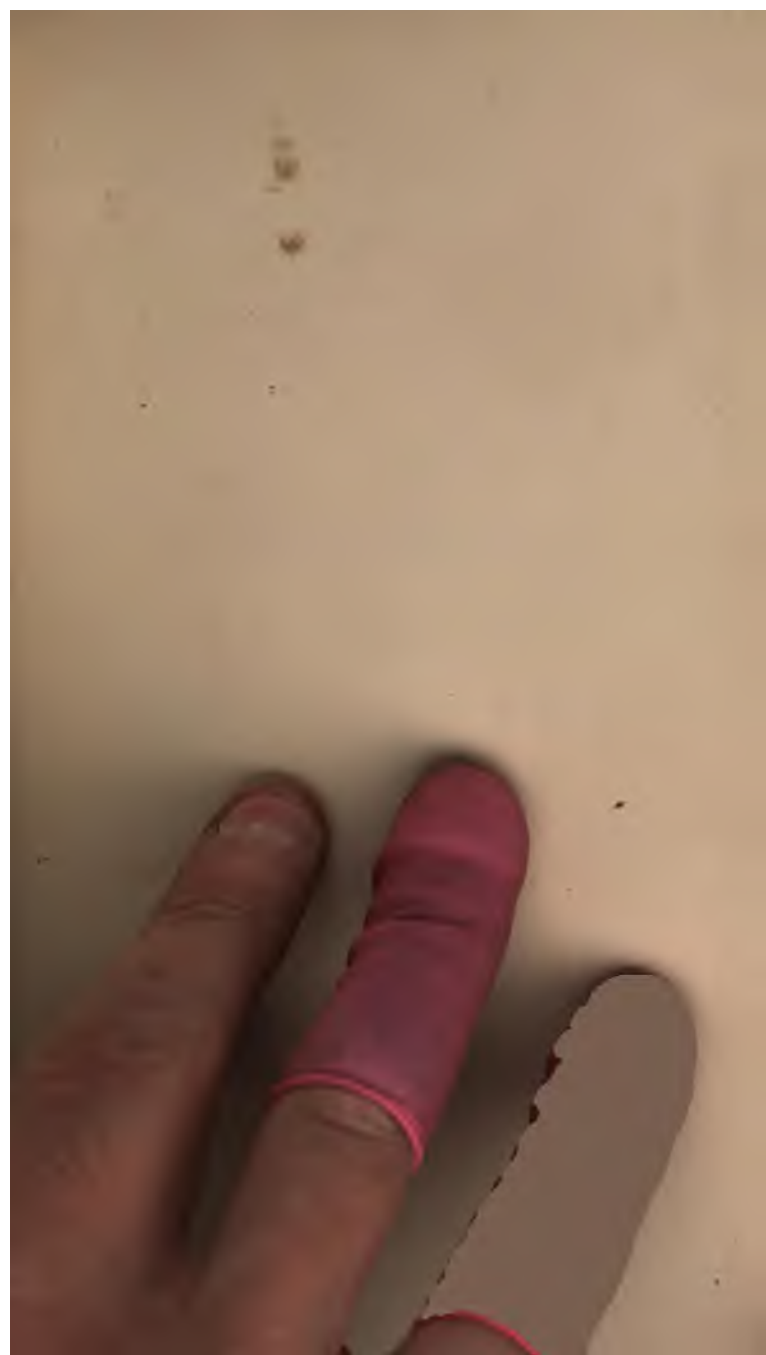


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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
JOHN MARSTON HALL.

VOL. I.

LONDON :
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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
JOHN MARSTON HALL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU," "HENRY MASTERTON,"
"MARY OF BURGUNDY," &c.

"Wo viel Licht ist, ist starker Schatten!"
Götz von Berlichingen.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR
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TO
HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY
ALEXANDRA FEODEROWNA,
EMPRESS OF ALL THE RUSSIAS.

MADAM,

I SHOULD have confined myself to expressing, in terms of unfeigned admiration and respect, my gratitude for the interest which Your Imperial Majesty is pleased to take in the literature of my country, and in the efforts of so humble an individual as myself, had I not felt that the work which you have permitted me to inscribe to your name is in every way

unworthy of being presented to one, alike illustrious by talents and virtues, and by rank.

At the time that Your Imperial Majesty's gracious message was communicated to me, the following pages were not only written, but in the press; and my strong desire to obey your commands without any delay, induces me to dedicate this work to you, although it is in some degree connected with a former production, already, I believe, in Your Majesty's possession.

Under other circumstances, I might have laboured, though I certainly should have laboured in vain, to produce a work worthy of your acceptance; but I must then have delayed long what I was eager to perform promptly; and, most assuredly, nothing that I could have written would

have worthily testified the admiration and pleasure with which I have marked, from afar, the immense efforts of yourself and your Imperial Consort to encourage literature and science in your dominions, and to improve the moral and social condition of your subjects.

That those efforts may be crowned with the most brilliant success, and repay you, to the last of your days, with the noblest recompence that monarchs can receive, — the blessings of a happy and enlightened people, — is the sincere prayer of

Your Imperial Majesty's

most humble

and most obedient Servant,

GEORGE PAYNE RAINSFORD JAMES.

THE
ADVENTURES
OF
JOHN MARSTON HALL.

CHAPTER I.

MY father was a gentleman of small estate in Lincolnshire, whose family possessions, under a race of generous ancestors, had dwindled from splendid lordships to bare competence. His blood, which was derived from as noble a source as that of any in the land, had come down to him pure through a number of knights and nobles, who, though they were little scrupulous as to the means of spending their riches, were very careful not to augment them by cultivating any but the somewhat barren field of war. He made a love match with a daughter of the second Lord Wilmerton; and, in order that his wife might not draw unpleasant com-

parisons between the station of her husband and that of her father, he frequented the court, and lived beyond his means. He was already in difficulties when I was born; but, like a brave man, he resolved to meet them boldly, and, after some solicitation, obtained a small military appointment, which increased his revenue without adding to his expenses. Loyalty with him was a passion, which, like love in other men, prevented him from seeing any faults in its object; and, of course, as the court well knew that no benefits could make him more loyal than he already was, it showered its favours upon persons whose affection was to be gained, leaving him to struggle on without further notice.

My mother I hardly remember, though my memory is very good; but as her death took place before I was three years of age, her cares of my infancy were never extended even to my boyhood.

Left thus to conduct my education alone, my father, I firmly believe, would have suffered nothing to remain undone which could have contributed to render me a learned man, had

not the civil war broken out, and all the royalists hastened to the support of the King. Amongst the first of the volunteers who flocked to the royal standard, when it was raised at Nottingham, was Captain Hall; and having been sent to Worcester with Prince Rupert, he showed himself the foremost in those acts of daring courage which turned the contest between Colonel Sandys and the Prince in favour of the Cavaliers. In every skirmish and in every battle which took place throughout the course of the great rebellion my father had his share. The natural desire of stimulus and excitement, which was originally strong in his character, grew gradually into a habit, and from a habit became a passion. The tidings of an approaching conflict would, at any time, have induced him to ride as far and fast as other men would go for more pacific pastimes; and the commanders of the royal armies perceived a want in their ranks when, on looking along the line, they could not discover the face of Captain John Hall.

During the first year of the civil war I was

left at home, under the charge of my nurse, and of the events of that period I, of course, remember but little. But shortly after the taking of Birmingham, by Prince Rupert, a party of Gettes's brigade were quartered at our house for three days, swept the whole estate of every thing that it produced, carried off all that could tempt their rapacity, and, on their departure, set fire to the house, as that of a notorious malignant.

My father's home had by this time become the tented field. Houseless and nearly penniless, the nurse carried me away in search of my only surviving parent, whose regiment was quartered at a few miles distance; and being a woman who loved quiet, and hated to see houses burned over head, she resigned her charge of me as soon as she had conscientiously placed me in the hands of my natural protector. But the addition of a child of four years old to his camp equipage was not by any means desirable in my father's eyes; and for some time he talked of placing me with a relation here, or a friend there, where I might remain in security. Two or three months, however, fled without this plan being executed.

We had often during that time to change our quarters; passed through more than one adventure; were involved in more than one severe struggle, and encountered as many hardships as a longer campaign could have inflicted. My father found that I bore up stoutly against them all, that I was not so great an encumbrance, in moments of danger and haste, as he had expected; and that in those lapses of inaction which will break in upon a soldier's life I afforded him amusement and occupation of the tenderest and most engaging kind. Thus I soon became necessary to his comfort and his happiness; and, though he would often talk still, of having me placed in some situation where I could be properly instructed in arts and sciences, and learned lore, it became evident to every one who saw us together that he would never part with me so long as he could keep me with him. To make up for the want of other knowledge, however, he himself began, from my very earliest years, to teach me every thing that might render me successful in that way of life which he himself had so ardently

embraced. My hands, almost in infancy, were accustomed to the sword, the dag, and the petronel; and I remember, ere I was six years old, being permitted, as a high favour, to apply the match to the touchhole of a culverin that commanded a road by which the Roundheads were advancing.

Many, too, were the dangers through which I passed in safety. Often in times of surprise and confusion have I sat upon the peak of my father's saddle, while he cut his way through the enemy; and often have I stood as a mere child amidst the charging squadrons and the bristling pikes of a general field of battle. Strife and bloodshed became so familiar to my mind, that I could hardly conceive another state of things; and when any occasional pause took place in the dreadful struggle that then desolated our native land, I used to wonder at the space of time such idleness was suffered to continue, and to long for the moment of activity and exertion. It was with joy and satisfaction that my father beheld this disposition in his son, and he strove by every means in his power to promote its

growth, and to direct the efforts that it prompted. He taught me to be quick and decisive, as well as bold and fearless: he bade me always think, in the first place, what was best to be done, and how it might best be executed; and then to perform what my reason had suggested without either fear or hesitation. Always keeping his view fixed upon the ultimate advantage of the cause he had espoused, he zealously instructed me to remark and remember every part of the country through which we passed in our wandering life, and the person of every one who was brought into temporary connection with us in the changing fortunes of those adventurous times.

Besides teaching me to ride and to shoot, and to perform all other military exercises, he did not fail to give me what little education, of a milder kind, circumstances permitted, during the short lapses of tranquillity which occasionally intervened. He was himself, however, obliged to be my preceptor; for he was not only prevented from engaging any other person in that capacity, by our continual changes from place to place,

but he was also rendered unable to do so by his pecuniary circumstances, which had by this time been reduced to the lowest ebb. Our own property had been sequestrated: the King had no money to bestow; and, although Captain Hall sometimes enjoyed a moment of temporary prosperity, after squeezing some rich parliamentarian, or capturing some inimical town, his whole property more usually consisted in his horse, his sword, and his son. I acquired, it is true, in a desultory manner, some knowledge of history, geography, and arithmetic; but this, together with a smattering of Latin, and the capability of writing and reading, was all that I could boast of by the time I was ten years old.

Our moments of quiet, indeed, were always of very short duration; and, during all my early remembrances, I scarcely can recollect having passed six weeks without seeing blood flow in civil strife.

It must not be thought, however, that our state was melancholy or painful. To those who thought as little of human life as the persons did by whom I was generally surrounded this kind of

existence was gay and happy enough. When they saw a comrade sent to his long home, or a friend fall dead by their side, a minute's mourning, and a vow to revenge him, was all that the sight excited; and many a cheerful bowl, and a gay jest, would circulate in the evening amongst the Cavaliers who had lost, in the morning, the dearest acquaintances and oldest companions.

Habit is a wonderful thing; and it would be difficult to make other people comprehend how little emotion bloodshed or massacre produces in the minds of men accustomed to be daily spectators of such scenes. It is not at all surprising then, that a boy—born, as it were, and brought up in the midst of them—should feel their awful nature less than others, and should enter with more pleasure into the adventurous excitement which they certainly afford. Such, at all events, was the case with myself; and although I have learned, from after events, to believe that my heart was neither naturally hard nor cruel, yet it is scarcely possible to describe the joy and enthusiasm I experienced on the approach of strife or battle, the triumph that I felt at the

overthrow or death of any remarkable foe, or the careless disregard with which I viewed the slaughter of my countrymen, and the fall even of those I personally knew. This military zeal was known and remarked by all my father's comrades; and the amusement and gratification which they derived from my early passion for that course of life to which they had given themselves up at a more mature age, caused me to be a general favourite with every old soldier in the ranks of the royalists; so that each one vied with the other in exciting me more and more upon the very track which I was already too eager to pursue. Amongst the Cavaliers I was generally known by the name of "Little Ball-o'-Fire;" and I soon learned to be proud of that appellation, and vexed when I was addressed by any other. In times of prosperity I was loaded with presents and caresses; and in moments of defeat and danger there was still some one to think of and to protect Little Ball-o'-Fire, the soldier's son. Nor were these good deeds entirely without requital on my part; for, shrewd, active, and fearless, I was often enabled to assist the de-

feated or pursued Cavalier, to mislead the Parliamentary by false information, or to gain intelligence of the enemy's movements, and to guide my friends either to security or victory.

Amongst all the comrades and connections of my father, Goring, afterwards Lord Norwich, was the foremost in his affections; and with him also I was an infinite favourite, although there were several others to whom I was personally more attached. I remember, however, many instances of great favour received from him; and, as difficulties multiplied round the royal cause, and as dangers threatened more and more imminently the head of our sovereign, it was to the exertions and friendship of Lord Goring that we were, more than once, indebted for our existence. With him we served in many a campaign in Kent and Sussex: with him have I aided my father to empty many a flagon when the fight was over; and with him have we lain in concealment for weeks together, when our paths were surrounded by enemies against whom our force was too weak to contend.

At length, when I was little more than ten years old, and a momentary gleam of success brightened the cause of the Cavaliers, my father and Lord Goring unfortunately separated; and with a small but well-appointed troop we hastened across the country with the intention of joining the royal army, which was then marching towards Cornwall. At Bolton-le-Moors, however, while we were marching gaily along, without the slightest idea that there was an enemy in our neighbourhood, we were suddenly surprised by a party of the parliamentary forces; and, after a rapid but desperate struggle, every man of my father's troop was put to death. He himself fell amongst the last, brought from his horse to the ground by a ball through the neck. I was at the distance of about fifty yards from him, and hastened up to give him aid; but just as I was running forward, I saw one of the pikemen stoop over him, and, while my father held up his hand, in the vain endeavour to ward off the blow, the man drove his weapon through him, and pinned him to the ground. I had a large horse-pistol

in my hand, which was instantly directed to the pikeman's head ; and, had I but had time to discharge it, he would, most assuredly, have lain beside the gallant officer he had just killed. But, at that moment, one of his comrades struck me across the head, with the staff of his pike, crying, " So much for thee, young viper !" and brought me, stunned and powerless, to the ground.

Fortunate it was for me that the blow, without being sufficiently violent to bereave me of life, had been severe enough to deprive me of all sense or motion, for I was thus passed over as dead, and I found afterwards that no one had been taken to mercy by the victors. It was evening when we began a fight, which, in duration, did not last ten minutes ; but when I woke from the sort of sleep into which I had fallen, I found the moon shining bright upon the Moors, with my father and five-and-twenty gallant soldiers lying dead around me. In truth, this was the first event that ever made me think of death, even for a moment, as of a thing to be feared, or regard strife as the great

destroyer of all dear affections and kindred ties. The sight was horrible enough, to see the bodies of such a number of brave and noble-hearted men now cold, inanimate, and most of them stripped of every thing valuable, lying dead in the pale moonlight, with their faces bearing all the various expressions which the human countenance can assume under different modes of violent death; but it was the sight of my father's corpse which brought it home to my own heart.

When I had recovered my senses completely — which was not for several minutes after consciousness began to return — I crept onward to the spot where my father had fallen, which was not above ten paces from that on which I had been lying; and as I gazed on his still, silent form, and thought of all the affection towards me which I had seen it bear so often, I could not help feeling that death is indeed a horrible thing. I looked at it long, till the moon began to set, and I knew not well what to do. I had no means of burying the body, and yet there was a feeling in my breast, not to be de-

fined, which would not let me leave the corpse of my father uninterred for the ravens to make it their prey, or the dogs to mangle it.

Near the spot, however, there was a little copse, with some tall trees rising out of the brushwood; and, after many a painful thought, thither I retreated for shelter. As I knew not who might visit the field from the town, and as I had heard that the people of the neighbourhood were rank Roundheads, I thought it best to climb one of the oaks; and there I watched till the dawn of morning. Hardly was the sky grey with the first light when I saw six or seven people coming over the Downs with spades and shovels, and I soon found that their purpose was to bury the dead. By them that office was performed decently enough on the spot itself; and in about three or four hours it was all over, leaving no trace of the skirmish, but the turf beaten up by the horses' feet and here and there died with gore, and the long low mound of fresh earth which covered the trench containing the dead bodies. I found, by the conversation of the men employed, that this act of

charity had been performed by order of some persons in the little town who had witnessed the affair; and who, partly moved by a sense of decency, and partly with a view to salubrity, had caused the corpses to be thus covered over with earth.

I was now, like many another, alone in all the earth; without friends, or home, or resource; without money, or protection, or expectation; but perhaps I was better fitted for such circumstances than any one who was ever yet cast an orphan upon the world. I was accustomed to rely upon myself alone; to take every event as I found it; and I had been so long in the habit of seeing the sunshine and the shade, the defeat and the triumph, the disaster and the success, succeed each other like April clouds and beams, that though my heart was full of mourning for my father, yet I confidently anticipated that the next cast of the die in fortune's hand would reverse my fate, and bring me back to prosperity again.

I was mistaken, however. A long series of sufferings ensued; and they were sufferings of a

nature that I had never encountered before. I had often, indeed, undergone privation, and known poverty. I had often been more than one day without tasting food, and had slept for many a night together on the bare ground; but all these inconveniences were part of the soldier's fate, matters which, however unpleasant at the time, were laughed at and forgotten as soon as they were over. Now, however, I had to endure poverty without one alleviating circumstance, or one consoling reflection.

All that I had on earth, at the moment my father was slain, consisted of two crown pieces, which had been given me by Lord Goring when we parted; but when I came to seek for them, after recovering my senses, I found that they had not escaped the researches of the plunderers who had stripped the dead around me. My clothes, indeed, probably being of little value either in point of size or quality, had been left me; and these, with a pistol and a dagger, which I found upon the ground, constituted my whole property, when at length I left the earth

that contained the body of my unfortunate parent, and went forth again into the world.

It would be difficult to give any detailed account of the life I now led. I wandered over almost every part of England, seeking a precarious subsistence by every means that my habits and education permitted. Often I fell in with old comrades of my father; and then I was sure of protection and assistance as long as they had the means of affording it. Often I joined myself to a troop of Cavaliers, and for a few days lived the life to which I had been accustomed in former years. But the power of the Parliament was daily increasing, that of the King daily going down; and, one by one, every force to which I joined myself was dispersed, and I was again obliged to seek my way alone. I never, however, yielded for one moment to despair; and at times, — when I have shared in the stores provided by nature for the birds in the air, when my sole food has been haws and whortle-berries, roots and acorns, — I have hummed to myself

“ There’s a better time coming ! ”

and gone on with a light heart to seek a richer meal for the next day.

Although to plunder or to kill a Roundhead, in any way that chance happened to present, was in my mind, at that time, neither sin nor shame, yet I cannot remember ever having done what I should even now consider an evil act on my own account. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that, when a wounded or a fugitive companion wanted food or other necessities, and could not obtain them for himself, I have often ventured beyond any code of morality that I know of, and have gone down to spoil the Philistines with indescribable glee.

Well known to every leader in the royal cause, and almost to every soldier, I was often employed as a guide, and still more frequently as a messenger. In the latter capacity, indeed, I was generally successful, even where others would probably have failed; and when Langdale rose in Wales he intrusted his design to me, for the purpose of having it clearly communicated to Musgrave in the north, and to the Cavaliers in Kent. I received no written document, indeed, although

my youth and my knowledge of the country enabled me, in general, to pass unmolested : but Langdale knew that he could trust to my never-failing memory to repeat every word as he had spoken it; and was also aware that the other royalists would trust to my report.

This commission I executed with ease and safety, as far as my journey to the north went; but in making my way towards Kent, I encountered more difficulties and some dangers. The small stock of money with which I had been furnished failed me before the object was accomplished; and at Reading I was recognised by a Puritan whom I had once, about six months before, tripped up into a river, while I ran off with a fat baked pig, which he was carrying out of the town from the baker's oven. Of the pig my share had been small, having performed the feat in favour of three old comrades who were lying concealed in the neighbouring fields, and were half dying of hunger: but, in the present case, the Roundhead made no nice distinctions; and as soon as he set eyes upon me, caught me by the throat, conveyed me to the town prison, not-

withstanding my most vigorous resistance, and left me in the hands of a gaoler, whose tokens of affection remained upon my skin for several weeks afterwards. Not at all admiring my fare or treatment in the prison, and having also acquired a strong distaste to remaining long in any one place, the very first opportunity afforded by open doors I made my escape,—not unpursued, it is true; but that mattered little; for at that time it was only necessary to give me the free use of my limbs, and a start of ten paces, and the man would have been swift and strong indeed that could have overtaken me.

Several other adventures also befell me: but at length I made my way into Kent; and here, to my unspeakable joy, I found myself amongst a royalist population, and saw in every part of the county preparations for a great effort in favour of the King. I heard, in every quarter, too, that Lord Goring was to take the command of the forces; and, sure of receiving protection and assistance, I made my way forward to join him, with a feeling in my heart that a change was about to come over my fate. I was half starved

by this time, and was all in rags; but many a better Cavalier than myself was in the same state, and I did not fear that my father's old friend would deny me.

Before I could reach the army, however, the royalist force had advanced towards London, and were again in retreat; and when I arrived in Maidstone, I found the Cavaliers pouring in, and learned that the enemy were following fast upon their steps. During the whole of that evening I could not find Lord Goring, (who, by the way, had, before this, become Earl of Norwich,) but I met with many an old acquaintance amongst the officers, and every kindness was shown to the son of Captain Hall. As an attack was expected early the next morning, the troops were under arms before dawn; and as the Earl was riding along the line, I ran up to the side of his horse, and spoke to him. For a moment, in the rags that now covered me, he did not recognise his friend's child, and replied sharply, "Get along, boy! get along! I cannot speak to thee now!"

It was the first rebuff I had ever received

from a Cavalier, and I thought that my heart would have broke ; but I still clung to his stirrup, and said, " What, my Lord, have you forgot Little Ball-o'-Fire ?" At that name he drew in his rein short, gazed upon my face for a moment, and then stooping down over his saddle bow, he caught me in his arms, and lifted me quite up to his bosom. " Forget thee ! no, my boy ! no !" he cried ; " and now I have found thee again, thou shalt never quit me for thy good father's sake."

There was little time given for farther conversation. The enemy had been more on the alert than we expected, and were, by this time, rapidly advancing, and the shot of their artillery began to tell upon our line. Every one has heard of the gallant defence of Maidstone : but it soon became clear that we could not maintain the position in which we were first attacked ; and Lord Goring, who had laid out his plan the night before, ordered a slow and firm retreat to the ground he had fixed upon, at the back of the town. Before he left the green, however, he beckoned me up and gave me a scrap of paper,

on which he had written something hastily. "Get thee behind that house, Ball-o'-Fire," he said, "and wait there till you see a young gentleman come up with a troop of Cavaliers. Ask if he be Colonel Masterton: give him that paper, and then guide him down by the back of the town to the hollow way, by which the enemy must advance: take him to any point he can best cut his way through, and bring him to me, on the edge of yon hill."

I did as I was bid; and Lord Goring himself remained for about ten minutes longer with the Kentish horse, keeping the green firmly against the enemy, while the other regiments filed off, and took up their position on the slope beyond. At length, he too retreated; and I hid myself while the enemy passed over the same ground. Scarcely was the green clear, when up at the full gallop came a young gentleman, seemingly scarcely twenty, with as gallant a regiment of horse as ever I saw. He halted his men before "The Bush" alehouse, and then rode on a few yards to see what was passing in the hollow way and on the slope.

His countenance was a pleasant one, at least to me, with a broad open brow, and quick fine eyes; and although I saw by the manner in which he looked at some dead and wounded soldiers who were scattered here and there, that he was not so habituated to scenes of death and conflict as myself, yet I could not help thinking that he must be the Colonel Masterton to whom I was ordered to address myself. I watched him for a minute, as his keen rapid glance ran over the confused spectacle that was passing beyond the town; and as I saw him turn his horse, and ride back towards his men, I ran up and spoke to him. At first he did not distinctly hear what I said, but he bent down his head towards me with a good-humoured smile, and I again repeated the words, "Colonel Masterton."

"Well, my little man," he replied, with a look of surprise, "what is it?"

I saw at once, from his tone and his look, that I was right, and I gave him the billet from Lord Norwich. He read it attentively; and

then asked "Can you lead me by some by-path to the left of the enemy's line?" I answered that I could; and, without more ado, set off before him, and conducted him by the back streets to a point where a lime road led out into the country.

The moment that his eye gained a clear sight of the enemy, I observed it mark every part of their position, rest fixed on one particular spot for an instant longer than any where else; and I saw that God had made him a soldier. His plan was evidently formed; his orders were short, clear, and accurate; and, drawing out his regiment from the town, he charged a large body of cavalry, who, together with some pieces of artillery, lay upon the extreme left of the enemy's line, and in a moment drove them to the devil.

I ran on as hard as I could to see what was going forward, and, just as I came up, I found the Roundhead horse forced back into the lines of the pikemen; and, one of the first faces that I beheld, amongst the Parliamentary foot, was that of the man who had killed my father.

I never forget faces, and his I was not likely to forget. The fellow was pike in hand, in front of the young cavalier; and I had just time to mark him so as not to be mistaken, when Colonel Masterton's horse passed the pike, and at one blow of the rider's sword the Roundhead went down never to rise again.

The battle was like all other battles; but by one means or another I contrived to keep near Colonel Masterton's regiment through the whole affair, till just when they were in some difficulty I offered to guide them up the lime road to Lord Goring, if one of the men would take me behind him on his horse. The young gentleman seemed surprised to find me so near him; and after another charge upon a body of the London troopers we made our way forward, and reached the brow of the hill where the Commander-in-chief then stood.

The event of that day every one knows. The enemy were repulsed at all points, but it could hardly be considered as a battle won, for we were ultimately obliged to retreat. After a

long, severe march we halted for the night, and I remained quartered with Colonel Masterton and his regiment, and was treated with the greatest kindness both by officers and men. It was soon found that the army, being chiefly composed of raw and ill-disciplined troops, could not be held together; and the same night Colonel Masterton was ordered to lead his regiment towards the right of the enemy's line of advance, and, if possible, to effect a diversion, while Lord Goring, with whatever veteran troops could be collected, endeavoured to cross the country, and throw himself into Colchester. After having attacked an outpost against which he was particularly directed, the young officer was ordered to disband a foot regiment which was joined to his cavalry force; and then — making the best of his way back to Devonshire, whence he had come — to disperse his men, and keep quiet till better times. As his family, from particular circumstances, although attached to the royal cause, had not called upon themselves the indignation of the Parliament, in near so high a degree as it had been excited against

Lord Goring, that nobleman, on giving me to Colonel Masterton as a guide, made him promise that he would always protect and never abandon me ; and well did he keep his word.

CHAPTERS II. III. IV. V. VI.*

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* The above chapters are omitted by the editor of this work, inasmuch as every fact contained in them is to be found much more fully detailed in the "Memoirs of Henry Masterton, Lord Masterton;" and it may be only necessary to add, for the information of such persons as are unfortunate enough not to have read that work, that Lord Masterton was accompanied through all the adventures therein described by John Marston Hall, the writer of the present book. Farther, it may not be impertinent to observe, that, as Lord Masterton himself states, the subject of the present memoirs was of infinite service and assistance to his noble friend in the difficulties and dangers which he had to encounter; and we have every reason to believe, that had it not been for the promptitude and assistance of "Little Ball-o'-Fire," as he is generally called in that work, the history of the noble Lord would not have been brought to so happy a conclusion. In the chapters here omitted, the writer details all the scenes that took place in England, and all those that followed in France, up to the period when his Lord Mas-

terton was happily wedded to the Lady Emily Langleigh, and took up his abode with her father at the beautiful little chateau of St. Maur. At that point we shall again commence the adventures of John Marston Hall, as written by himself, and proceed, even to their conclusion, with no other alteration whatever, than a slight modification of the orthography, which does not particularly well suit the fashion of the present day, and the occasional translation of various passages originally written in the French tongue.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN all these affairs were settled, and my young Lord Masterton and fair lady were looking as pleased as heart could wish, going about with each other from morning till night, and seeming perfectly contented in every respect, the house began to grow tedious enough; for though, perhaps, in the wide range of human enjoyments there is no greater pleasure than that of contributing to render other people happy, there are few things more tiresome than looking on after the work is complete. I loved Lord Masterton, it is true, as sincerely as it was possible; for dangers encountered with him, and services both rendered to him and received from him, had of course made him very dear to me. I loved Lady Emily too, just enough less dearly than I did my Lord to make my affection distant and respectful; and they both loved me, very much, from the same

motives that I loved them. Nevertheless, I acknowledge again that the time hung very heavy upon my hands ; and after the first week of the honeymoon, with all its bustle and its gaiety was over, I began to long for something new.

I have no doubt that Lord Masterton, who was keen enough in perceiving other people's feelings, had no difficulty in understanding that the happiness of himself and his wife was too quiet and tranquil in its nature to be very amusing to other people ; and knowing perfectly that I was of a disposition to which activity, either mental or corporeal, was absolutely necessary, he took no small pains, as soon as he could think of any thing besides his bride, to give me full occupation, in supplying, what he called, the defects in my education. I was taught French thoroughly, which, to say truth, has been of great use to me ; but, at the same time, I was filled with a great deal more Latin than I ever knew what to do with ; and an attempt was made to cram me with Greek, which I resisted with all the repugnance of

a child for an emetic. Still Lord Masterton, thinking himself bound to act the part of an elder brother to the orphan boy he had taken under his protection, persevered in the attempt; and several other branches of science were added to my daily routine of instruction; but I need hardly tell the reader, that this sort of occupation was the least palatable that it is possible to conceive in the estimation of a boy brought up as I had been.

I believe, and, indeed, am sure, that my good young Lord saw how distasteful the whole was to me; for I have often remarked, when he casually entered my place of study, that a slight smile would play upon his lip, as he noticed any of the fretful and impatient movements with which I accompanied my lessons. He persevered for nearly nine months, however, thinking it absolutely necessary, I imagine, both to give me such instructions, and to tame, in some degree, my wild and restless spirit. For my part I was too grateful for all that he had done for me, too sensible of the kindness of his motives, and too well aware of the supe-

riority of his mind, to complain aloud of any thing that he might think beneficial for me to do. Repine, I did, in secret, and that most heartily; but nevertheless, as I was quick and active in mind as well as body, and applied myself diligently to learn while I was about it, I probably gained more in the same space of time than many other people would have done. At length, one day, to my surprise, my usual masters did not appear from Paris, and I received directions from my Lord to prepare to accompany him on a long ride.

This was all very pleasant to me, especially as it seemed to augur something new; and no language that ever yet I heard is adequate to describe the sort of thirst for some novelty — some change in my situation — which then consumed me. Gladly did I get myself ready, gladly did I mount my horse; and, riding forward with Lord Masterton alone, while the grooms remained at a good distance behind, I gave way to all the wild gladness of my heart.

Lord Masterton suffered the first burst of joy to have its full course, and smiled as he re-

marked it ; but in a few minutes he assumed a more serious tone, saying, " Come, come, Little Ball-o'-Fire, let us ride on calmly, and converse like rational people, for I have something serious to say to you."

In a moment I was all attention, and he proceeded : —

" I was in hopes," he said, " to have kept you with me yet for several years—till such time, indeed, as young men usually set forth in the world ; and even then only to have parted with you in order to have placed you in some station where you might win honour, and make your way to fame. For such a purpose, however, it was necessary that all those points which circumstances had caused your father to neglect in your education should be supplied here, and I consequently have endeavoured to obtain for you every sort of instruction which this country can afford."

" Indeed, my Lord," I cried, as he paused for a moment, " I am not of the wood of which men make a scholar, and I am afraid, if my getting on in the world is ever to depend upon

my learning, that I shall drop by the wayside from pure weariness."

"I have come to the same conclusion too," he answered, in a tone which expressed some degree of mortification, but not a touch of anger, — "I have come to the same conclusion too; for you must not suppose that I have been blind to your impatience. I had hoped, indeed, that it would wear away, though Lord Langleigh assured me that it would not; but now having given you the trial, having added something to your stock of knowledge, and having found that your distaste to study increased rather than diminished, I have determined to abandon the attempt, and to let you follow out that way of life for which nature seems to have formed you, and in which fortune herself had placed you."

Never did such joyful words ring in my ears before; and had we not been on horseback I should have thrown myself at his feet to pour forth the gratitude that swelled in my heart. Words, however, were not wanting; and although I never made use of more than served

my purpose, yet I contrived to make him understand how very happy he had made me.

“ Well, well,” he replied, “ all I can wish is to advance your interests ; but you are of course aware, that such a change of prospects implies that you must leave me.”

Although I had thought the matter over a thousand times, and pictured to myself all I should like to do, yet I had certainly never contemplated the necessity of quitting a friend and protector that I loved, as a part of the scheme ; and when he placed it thus plainly before me the tears rose in my eyes.

“ Such, nevertheless, must be the case,” he continued ; “ for, of course, to pass your time in idleness here would be as disagreeable to you as to pass it in dry study.”

“ But cannot you go to the wars,” I cried, “ and let me go with you ? ” Lord Masterton smiled. — “ I am afraid,” he replied, “ that I cannot mingle in the scenes of civil strife that are going on here, solely to find occupation for your active spirit. No, no, my good boy, Lord Langleigh and myself agree in thinking,

that foreigners, casting themselves upon the protection and hospitality of a nation like this, should take no part in the factious intrigues that agitate the country ; and we have determined to remain as quiet as possible till they are all over, which we both hope and believe will be the case ere many years be past ; for the most turbulent cannot long remain blind to the dreadful evils which such a state of distrust, uncertainty, and apprehension inflicts upon every class in the community. But to return to our subject: it becomes us now to think of how we can place you to the best advantage. You are too young, of course, to serve in any of the regiments at present in activity, and if we place you as page to any one else, it must solely be with a view to your military promotion hereafter. A gentleman who was here the other day, with our good friend Monsieur de Vitray, was pleased with your history, and expressed a desire for just such a boy as you, to bring up in his own steps, which have ever been foremost in the field of battle."

"Who, who was that?" I cried eagerly. "I

saw them all. Was it the dark man with the heavy hanging brow? I do not like him."

"No, no," he answered. "It was Monsieur de Villardin who sat at table on Lord Langleigh's left, with dark hair, just mingled with grey, and a scar across his forehead."

"I like him," I replied, "I like him!" and Lord Masterton went on. — "Well," he said, "he luckily liked you and your character; and after a long consultation with myself upon the subject, and the fullest consideration of your interests and your happiness, Lord Langleigh is now gone to speak with Monsieur de Villardin on your account, and to see whether he is willing to receive you in the capacity which we wish you to fill. Although the usages of this country would render it in no degree degrading for the son of the first nobleman in the land to become the page of the Duc de Villardin, yet we wish you, as it were, in quitting me, to gain a step in life. Lord Langleigh, therefore, will tell him that if he will receive you as superior to his common pages, and promise to obtain for you a commission in the service of the state, when you

reach the usual age, we are willing to place you under his care. At the same time, to enable you always to maintain the station which we wish you to take, we have determined to grant you a pension of a thousand crowns per annum, chargeable upon a farm of Lord Langleigh's in Normandy. You will thus be independent of any one, for the deed of gift shall be drawn out, giving you that revenue irrevocably."

The confused whirl of joyful ideas that took place in my brain at these tidings would be difficult to express. The idea of seeing the *world*, and mingling in scenes of warlike activity once more, was all joy; and if there had been any thing which could have given me a moment's uneasiness in the prospect of going forth again into that world alone, it was the chance of being reduced to the state of poverty and destitution which I had suffered for one whole year. I do not mean to say that I did fear it, for I was not of a character to fear any of earth's evils, or even to take them into consideration in my lookings forward towards the future; but the memory of some pains and some degrad-

ations which I had suffered did certainly cross my mind for a single moment, though without any power to affect my hopes or purposes. By the liberality, however, of my kind protectors, all such apprehensions were entirely removed. I had now always a resource, and that resource greater in amount than the pecuniary means of many a nobleman's son. Sorry I am to say, that for the time these joyful feelings, and all the gay dreams to which they gave rise, very nearly wiped away the grief I had felt at the prospect of quitting Lord Masterton; and although I was deeply grateful, and expressed my gratitude for the new proofs of his generous kindness which he had just given me, I could not help, as we rode home, raving upon all the bright anticipations which I entertained in regard to the future.

He smiled at my delight; and though perhaps another man might have been offended at the little regret I expressed at leaving him, he had himself known what the spirit of adventure was too well not to make full allowance for the passionate desire of novelty that I felt, and for

the restless love of change which habit had, in my case, rendered second nature.

To hear the success of Lord Langleigh's mission was now my thirst. But he did not return for several hours, and I was obliged to bridle my impatience the best way I could. When he did appear, however, his countenance, which was a very expressive one, showed me at once that he was well pleased with the event of his errand. Nevertheless, he said nothing to me on the subject; and as Lord Masterton was out of the way, I was still compelled to digest my curiosity till the next morning. Before breakfast, however, I observed them in close conference for some time; and Lord Langleigh, whose custom it was never to talk upon any subject of importance sitting still, called me to him as he rose from the breakfast-table, and in a walk through the park informed me, with his usual prompt but somewhat sparkling manner, that the Duc de Villardin had very willingly agreed to all that he proposed.

"You are not to think," he added, "from his readiness to take you, urchin," — the name

by which he always called me, — “ that you are any great acquisition, after all. Nevertheless, you are a good, quick-handed boy ; and if you go on as you have begun, you are in a fair way to get yourself hanged, shot, or made a field-marshal of. My son-in-law tells me, what indeed I very well knew without his telling, that your heart is all on fire for activity and new scenes. Now, with Monsieur de Villardin, it is probable that you will have as much as you could well desire ; for he is one of those men who let no moment fly by them unmarked by some deed or some event. He is in the midst of all the Parisian factions too ; and, if one half of the rumours of the day be true, they will soon bring down Spanish cunning to aid French intrigue, and make a mess of it fit for the palate of the devil himself. So now you will be in your right element, urchin, and I will only give you one piece of advice before you go. Never let your zeal for any one’s service make you act ill, even to his greatest enemy.”

I felt myself turn as red as fire, for, to say the truth, the good old lord had touched upon a

tender point ; and, though I was young enough to think of such matters lightly, yet, during the nine months which I had lately passed in a much more contemplative manner than pleased me, a suspicion would now and then come across my mind, that one or two things in my past life might as well have been left undone. Lord Langleigh observed me colour, and adding, with a nod, " It is worth your thinking of," he left me and returned to the house. I did think of his advice long and eagerly ; and his words sunk down into my heart, producing therein the first of many changes which I shall yet have to notice in my principles and conduct, as in passing through life, I every now and then gained a lesson or an admonition, which taught me my own weaknesses, or restrained my wild passions. It was in vain, I soon felt, to look back and regret the past ; but from that moment I formed my determination for the future, and tried never to forget, that no cause could ever justify an evil action.

All after arrangements were soon concluded. My dress was already more splendid than was

at all necessary. My purse was well furnished by the liberality of my kind benefactors ; and a pass having been procured for me to enter Paris, I took leave of the family at St. Maur three days after the conversation I have just detailed, and was delivered over into the hands of Monsieur de Villardin himself by the chief *écuyer* of Lord Langleigh, who accompanied me into Paris.

My new Lord received me very graciously, and promised me great things if I attached myself to him as zealously as I had done to Lord Masterton. His countenance, I have already said, had pleased me from the first ; and it certainly was one well calculated to command both respect and regard. Nevertheless, as I came to know him better, I remarked occasionally two expressions which I had not at first observed, but which were strongly indicative of his real character, or, rather, of his faults. The first was a quick, sharp, enquiring, perhaps fierce expression, when any thing was said in an under tone by the persons around him. This, however, passed away in a minute ; but the se-

cond, which consisted in a tremendous gathering together of the brows when any one seriously offended him, would last for some hours, and it was evidently with difficulty that he could re-assume his usual gay and cheerful manner, through the whole of the rest of the day.

I had early learned to watch people's countenances as the weather-glasses of their minds, and thence to judge, not only of what was passing within at the moment, but also of their habitual feelings and inherent disposition. This had been taught me by my father, who had established his criterions for judging by long experience ; and I had not seen the fierce, sharp look, and the deep, heavy scowl, upon the face of the Duke more than twice, when I established it in my own mind, as a fact beyond doubt, that he was both suspicious and revengeful. At the same time I discovered, by other circumstances, that he was highly sensitive to ridicule ; and that, knowing well to how many jests he would expose himself if he suffered his irritable jealousy to appear, he laboured stre-

nuously to cover it by the same light and witty manner of treating every thing, which in that day was universally affected by all Frenchmen. In this he was not particularly successful; for, though his mind was quick and brilliant enough, his heart was too full of deep and powerful feelings to harmonise well with that playful badinage which alone affects the surface.

So much for my new master; but there are other members of his family which yet remain to be noticed. The first of these, of course, is Madame la Duchesse, to whom he led me immediately after I had been presented to himself, and introduced me as his new page, of whom she had heard so much. She was a very lovely woman, and at heart a most amiable one; considerably younger than her husband, perhaps about four-and-twenty years of age; and though, I believe, it would be doing Diana herself no injustice to compare her to Madame de Villardin in point of chastity, yet at the time I was first presented to her, ere sorrow or domestic discomfort had tamed the light heart and banished the vanities of youth, she had decidedly that love of admiration which has often,

in this world, done more harm to a woman's character, than half-a-dozen *faux pas*. It mattered not with whom she was in company — rank, station, age, made no difference — admired she was determined to be by every one who came within the sphere of her influence: a thousand little airs would she assume to excite attention; and bright and sparkling was the triumph which lighted up her eyes when she had succeeded in captivating or attracting. In the case of myself even, a boy of twelve years old, she could not resist the desire of displaying the same graces which she spread out before others; and when her husband brought me forward to her, the smile that played around her lips, the flash that glistened from her fine eyes, and the elegant attitude with which she held me by the arm, and gazed for a moment in my face, were all a little more than natural, and very, very different from the calm, sweet manners of the beautiful Emily Langleigh.

Besides herself, I found in the saloon where she was sitting her only child, a fine lively girl

of little more than six years old, who afterwards became my frequent playfellow.

Having introduced me to his lady, and told her several particulars of my history, adding no small commendations thereunto on my own behaviour, the Duke summoned his major-domo, to whose hands he consigned me, bidding him make me familiar with the house, and all that it contained. The old man, who had been in the family of De Villardin from infancy, took me by the hand kindly enough, and led me away to his own apartment, which consisted of two small, neat chambers, on the lower story, looking out into the court. Excellent old Jerome Laborde, for such was the name of the major-domo, took care, as we went along, to give me many a consolatory assurance of my being well taken care of, and rendered very happy, in the mansion of his master, conceiving me to be one of those young and inexperienced boys who are generally preferred to the place of page in a nobleman's house at a tender age, and who, commencing with timidity and innocence, generally end in impudence and intrigue. His

compassion was also moved towards me from the misfortune, as he thought it, of my being an Englishman. But by this time I had learned to speak French almost as fluently as my native tongue ; and, before I had been half an hour with the old major-domo, I had convinced him thoroughly that I was a person to make myself very much at home any where, and in any circumstances. His ideas of a page, however, did not permit him to imagine that, as I had not the bashful fears of the earlier stages of pagehood, I could have any thing better in my character than the pert sauciness of its latter epoch ; and, having conceived this bad opinion of me, the good old man very soon civilly told me, that he would lead me to the page's room, where I would find three others, as gay and bold as myself. But before I proceed to this new theatre on which my young abilities were destined to display themselves, let me add that, ere many days had passed, I found means to convince worthy Jerome Laborde that the circumstances of my former life had rendered me a very different creature from any he had yet

met with in all his long experience of pages. The injustice that he found he had done me, added to the favourable impression he afterwards received, gained me a place in his good will, which I did not lose till his death.

A scene, however, was yet to take place which was to signalise my entrance into the house of Monsieur de Villardin, and to place me, by my own exertions, in that station in his family which Lord Langleigh had previously stipulated that I should enjoy. On entering the page's room, as it was called, I found, indeed, three boys as gay and bold as myself, full of saucy conceit and pert jocularities. They were all older than I was, and one seemed little less than fifteen years of age. No sooner was I left there by the major-domo than, of course, I became the subject of their raillery, and for some time submitted to afford them matter for amusement. Their first employment was, naturally, the examination of my dress, which I could see, by a frequent shrug of the shoulders, and the words *mauvais goût*, did not particularly please these juvenile *petit-mâîtres*.

Going from that, however, to other matters, they carried their jocularities so far, that I soon found it would be necessary to exert one or two of the qualities which I had acquired in a harder school than any to which they had ever been subjected, in order to put them in that place which I intended them to occupy during the rest of my stay in the family. I consequently took advantage of the first insolent word spoken by the eldest — who appeared to have a right prescriptive to tyrannise — and, having drubbed him more heartily than ever he was drubbed before, I proceeded to reduce the two others to a complete state of discipline and subordination.

It may easily be supposed that all this was not effected without considerable noise; for though we were all small enough to have lain quiet in any house, my three companions were very vociferous. Just as I was putting what may be called the finishing stroke to the affair, by once more knocking down the eldest, who — on finding that his two fellow-pages, notwithstanding all they had suffered from him in former times,

were now willing to espouse his cause against the new comer, had roused himself again to the combat—I perceived that the door of the apartment was ajar, and that the face of Monsieur de Villardin (with two or three *écuyers* behind) was gazing in upon the conflict. This discovery, however, did not prevent my giving full force to my blow, and my antagonist measured his length upon the floor at his master's feet.

“ Very well struck for a *coup d'essai*,” cried the Duke, walking in ; “ every fresh dog must of course fight his way through the pack ; but now, young gentlemen, as your new comrade seems to have satisfied you pretty well that his must be the first station amongst you right of superior strength and activity, I also tell you that it is his by my will. Gaspard,” he continued, turning to his eldest page, “ you are but a boy, and not fit to cope with one who has slain men. So submit with a good grace, and give him your hand.”

The boy, who had by this time risen from the floor, obeyed ; but, as he did so, he eyed

me from under his bent brows with a look that was sufficient warning that I had gained an enemy. This was an acquisition not particularly disagreeable to me; for, to tell the truth, I had at that time been so much more accustomed to deal with enemies than friends, that I hardly felt in my element without them; and, indeed, as I looked upon man's natural position to be a state of warfare, I was always prepared to bear my share in it with good will. These opinions, it is true, changed greatly afterwards; but how the alteration was brought about is to be found in the history of my after life.

The mortification of Gaspard de Belleville, which was the name of my chief opponent, was rendered complete by the Duke selecting me as the companion of his ride to the *palais*, where the parliament was then sitting. But I must speak of the events which occurred to me in Paris by themselves; nor, indeed, should I have mentioned the childish squabble which took place between me and the other pages, had it not been necessary to explain the origin of a

good solid hatred which Gaspard de Belleville conceived towards me, and which lasted, undiminished, through life, rendering his own days miserable, and having quite sufficient effect upon my fate to show me that we should never make an enemy when we can make a friend.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE city of Paris, and the country in general, were then in a pitiable state, owing to every party in the land combining, in the strongest degree that it is possible to imagine, the qualities of knave and fool. The parliament was playing the fool in Paris, and yet sacrificing the country to the nicest calculations of its own interest. The party of the Duke of Bouillon was playing the fool, and letting slip every opportunity of effecting its own objects, while it was calling a foreign power into the heart of its native country to obtain them. The people were playing the fool in suffering themselves to be led by an ass, the Duke de Beaufort, and by a knave, the Cardinal de Retz, while, at the same time, they took care to enrich themselves by the plunder of the stores and magazines; and last, not least, the court was playing the fool at St. Germain, treating weakly where it

might have acted vigorously, and yet cheating all the other parties with the most consummate art.

The situation of France at the time I entered Paris was, in a few words, as follows:— Louis XIV. was then a mere boy, under the regency of his mother, who, in turn, was under the government of Cardinal Mazarin; and these three personages, together with the Prince of Condé, and a large body of nobility, were then at St. Germain-en-laye, shut out of the city of Paris, which they were besieging without a sufficient body of troops to take even one of the gates. The parliament which had begun the war, and the people who had seconded it, remained in the capital, hating Mazarin, and laughing at the court; but heartily sick of a war which prevented the butter and cream from the country reaching Paris in safety; while a party of clever men and immense rogues, consisting of a number of general officers, with the Dukes of Bouillon, Elbeuf, Beaufort, the Prince de Conti, and the Archbishop de Retz, laboured night and day to keep both people and par-

liament in a state of agitation and excitement, in order that each of these worthy and notable leaders might wring from the weakness of a regency every sort of gift, honour, and emolument. For this purpose, open war had been declared against the court, while, as usual, the King's name was used, and the King's standard displayed on both sides. All the people in the realm seemed mad, and a strange spirit of contradicting their own established characters appeared to have seized upon every one. Acknowledged cowards led armies and rushed into battle, the most faithful turned traitors, the most honest became knaves, the firm were in a continual state of vacillation, the wise showed themselves fools, and the brave ran away. However, as it became evident to the Parisian generals that the parliament was inclined to separate from the people, and make peace with the court for itself, before the concessions were granted which they, the generals, demanded for themselves, they determined to do their best, by means of the people within the city and of armies without, to compel the parliament to be honest to

them and dishonest to the court. Negotiations were immediately opened with the Spanish government of the Low Countries, Spanish ambassadors were received in Paris, the Archduke began his march into France, Turenne himself, with the common madness of the day, raised the standard of rebellion against his king in aid of his brother the Duke of Bouillon, and the Duc de Longueville promised to advance also with his forces from Rouen to support the Parisians in their struggle.

Such was the situation of things externally when I entered the capital, and became attached to one of the party of general officers. At the same time, it is to be remarked, that deputies from the parliament were treating for peace at Ruel; and though the date of their powers had expired, they were still continuing their negotiations. A report even was current that they had concluded a treaty with Mazarin; and as I had passed through the town on my way to the house of Monsieur de Villardin, I had found the people collected in large bodies, shouting

“Down with Mazarin! down with the parliament!”

By the time that we issued forth into the streets to take our way to the building where the great judicial body was assembled, the rumour had become still more general, and the crowds, of course, were increased. Nothing was heard but cries and shouts, and what were then called Mazarinades. Poniards, muskets, pikes, and swords were in all hands; and so very indiscriminate was the use which the people seemed inclined to make of their weapons, that it was only by constantly joining in their shout of down with Mazarin that we made our way through them in safety. The numbers in the neighbourhood of the *palais* were still more immense and vociferous; and even the crowd of guards who were keeping the court and the doors of the building seemed not a whit less infuriated than the people. At the same time persons were seen continually coming out from the parliament, and haranguing the multitude; and those also who went in seldom failed to treat them to a taste of their eloquence ere they en-

tered the gates. The state of insanity to which all this oratory raised the populace may easily be imagined; and at one time I heard a man exclaim from amongst the crowd, that they should hang the deputies over the gates; while one of the town-guard added, that if Monsieur de Villardin, who was just going in, would return and point out to them who were really the *Mazarins* in the parliament itself, they would drag them out, and poniard them in the court.

Upon this, the Duke, of course, favoured them with an oration also, and a curious piece of composition it was; consisting of a series of pleasantries upon the parliament, upon Mazarin, upon himself, upon the court, and upon every thing, mingled with a few apophthegms upon policy, religion, and morals, which all tended to captivate the people, and make them think him wondrous wise, without tending in the least to calm them, or reduce them to order and decency. Now Monsieur de Villardin was not only a polished speaker, and, where his own passions were not concerned, a close reasoner, but he was also really a patriotic, generous, disinterested

man ; and the fact of his speaking for half an hour, as he did on the present occasion, a tissue of high-sounding, disjointed nonsense, which could only serve to inflame still farther the minds of a mad and excited populace, can only be accounted for upon the grounds of the general insanity which seemed at that time to have seized upon all ranks and classes.

This oration being finished, we entered the Parliament House ; and, by the special favour of one of the door-keepers, my new lord was permitted to take me with him into the interior of the building, perhaps anticipating one of those scenes in which the prompt hand and ready perception, that had been my principal recommendation in his eyes, might be serviceable to him in more ways than one. We took our way by the great staircase in the right wing, and soon found ourselves in what is called the *Salle des pas perdus*, which was full of people of all sorts and descriptions ; guards, door-keepers, and officers of the *palais* ; counsellors, statesmen, members of the different chambers, and the mixed crowd of attendants belonging to

all those who were thronging to the parliament on the present momentous occasion. Passing onward, through the small refreshment rooms called *Les Buvettes*, where no obstacle was presented to my following my master, we were soon in the midst of the hall in which the parliament were assembled; and such a scene of disgraceful confusion has seldom perhaps been witnessed. Half-a-dozen people were upon their feet haranguing at once; and several minutes elapsed before any thing could be heard except a confused gabble of tongues, which might have done honour to the top of the tower of Babel.

At length, the Duke d'Elbeuf, whom I had seen before, and who seemed to have the longest breath, the loudest voice, and the most determined pertinacity of the party, obtained the ascendancy; and one by one sitting down, he was left speaking alone.

“Now, Sir President,” he continued, turning to a man of dignified appearance, who, habited as a high law officer, occupied one of the principal places of the assembly,—“now, Sir President, since I can make myself heard, I demand

distinctly whether you or any of your fellow-deputies have, at your conference with Mazarin and the court, made any provision whatever for the security and remuneration of the generals and other officers who have sacrificed so much in the cause of the parliament and the people."

"Before I reply to any particular questions," answered the President, "I will, with the permission of the parliament, read the *procès verbal* of our proceedings at the conference at Ruel. Then having seen what we have really done, the chambers will be enabled to judge whether they can approve of the treaty of peace we have concluded."

"You had no power, you had no power," shouted forty or fifty voices at once,—"you had no power to conclude any thing! Your authority expired four or five days ago! There is no peace; we will have no peace! The deputies have gone beyond their powers; they have abandoned disgracefully our generals and our friends!"

In vain the Chief President attempted to read the paper which he had in his hand. Every time he opened his mouth his words

were drowned in murmurs and reproaches; and, even when he abandoned the endeavour and sat down, it was clear that the rest of the assembly only waited for some new word to break forth again into tumult and invective. All solemnity, all dignity, was laid aside: the turbulence had not even the impressiveness derived from being terrible: it was simply ridiculous; and the only image presented to the mind by the whole scene was a body of fishwomen scolding in a market.

After the silence of perhaps a minute which ensued, a little pale young man, who seemed to me slightly deformed, and who I afterwards found was the Prince de Conti, rose near the head of the hall, and said, in a mild and sweet-toned voice, that he did wonder that the deputies from the parliament had thought fit to conclude a peace with the court, without consulting himself and the generals of the army. Another person, who was afterwards addressed as the Duke de Bouillon, with a broad, unmeaning countenance, which, however, lighted up in an extraordinary manner when he began to speak,

followed the Prince de Conti in addressing the parliament:—

“Gentlemen,” he said, “since you have thought fit to conclude a peace with the court, and allowed the Cardinal Mazarin, whose enmity I have so highly provoked in your service, to remain prime minister, the only favour and reward that I shall require of you is, to obtain me a passport, as speedily as possible, to quit the country with my family.”

“We have not concluded a peace; we disavow it. The deputies had no power,” cried a dozen voices at once; and every body again began speaking together, as if the sense of hearing had suddenly left the whole assembly. One man, the Duke de Beaufort, who was handsome enough, indeed, but whose good looks were principally composed of high health and stupidity, laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword, and declared that it should never draw blood for Mazarin. Another protested that the parliament had rendered itself for ever unworthy of the confidence of the people; and, what be-

tween reproaches and tumult, more than an hour passed without any thing being concluded.

In the midst of all this uproar, however, a piece of buffoonery, performed by the well-known Bachaumont, restored some sort of good humour to the assembly; for, seizing a momentary pause, when every tongue, as if by common consent, halted to take breath, he passed behind the famous De Retz, then archbishop-coadjutor of Paris, snatched forth a poniard, which he had espied lying concealed in the bosom of that factious prelate, and, holding it up to the eyes of the parliament, exclaimed, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, look at the breviary of our archbishop!"

A roar of laughter succeeded, which left the whole of that grave assembly so much out of countenance, that it was some time before they could speak of any serious business, much more return to the angry disputation in which they had been interrupted.

Taking advantage of the change, one of the lawyers, called the President de Coigneux,

rose, and made the most sensible proposition which had yet been heard; namely, that, as the deputies had acted without authority, and as the responsibility of what they had done, of course, rested upon themselves, they should be sent back with the treaty they had framed, and, though permitted to take it for the basis of a new one, should be directed, in addition, to stipulate for immunity and recompense to the generals and nobles who had engaged in the cause of the parliament.

He had not yet concluded his harangue, however, when a tremendous noise in the court below, and even in the hall without, together with loud shouts of "Down with Mazarin! Down with the parliament! Hang up the deputies! Long live the noble generals! Let us have a republic! Set fire to the *palais!*" and other such sweet and delectable exhortations, roared by the stentorian voices of the crowd, caused the orator to turn very pale, and to sit down before he had finished his oration. Another lawyer rose to second the proposal of the first: but by this time the noise had become so tremendous that

what he said could not be distinguished; and the moment after the great door of the hall opened, and one of the doorkeepers entered, pale and trembling, announcing, in a voice scarcely articulate with fear, that the populace had forced their way into the *Salle des pas perdus*, and demanded to speak with the Duc de Beaufort.

That prince — who, with scarcely common sense to carry him through the world, was the great popular leader both at that time, and for many years afterwards — went out and tranquillised the people for a few minutes; but scarcely had he again entered the hall when the tumult recommenced, and it was found absolutely necessary to break up the sitting.

Nevertheless, the Chief President—although against himself personally, as the principal member of the deputation which had signed the peace, the anger of the multitude was most fiercely excited—still maintained his place with calm dignity; and declared, without the slightest shade of fear detracting from his perfect self-possession, that a proposition being before the parliament,

it could not separate without coming to some decision on the subject. The motion that the deputies should be sent back was immediately put; and was carried with somewhat timid rapidity. The next question was, how to get the obnoxious deputies to their houses with their lives, especially the Chief President, who, notwithstanding political differences, was admired and esteemed by every nobler spirit present.

He had just taken the voices of the assembly, as calmly as he would have done at any ordinary time, and on any ordinary occasion; and, for a moment after, there followed a general pause, while the whole assembly looked upon him with a feeling of interest and apprehension that is difficult to describe. Even I, myself, who had never seen him before, and now, as I stood behind, under one of the arches, only caught an occasional view of him through the crowd, felt that I would have shed my own blood to save him. Every body present was well aware that there existed a thousand chances to one that he would be massacred the moment he showed his face amongst the infuriated mob without;

but he himself did not seem to feel that he was an object of any particular attention, or to suppose that there was any imminent danger, though he must have been internally convinced that his life was not certain for a moment. Calmly rising, however, after he had declared the vote of the chambers, and had pronounced the sitting at an end, he prepared to leave the hall without any apparent agitation. As he took the first step towards the door, the Duke de Bouillon and several other officers, amongst whom my new lord was one, pressed about him, and entreated him to pass round by the writing-rooms at the back of the building, by which means he would avoid encountering the people.

“Gentlemen,” he replied, “the court of parliament never conceals itself; and if I were certain of being torn in pieces the moment I set my foot beyond this hall, I would not commit such an act of cowardice as to go out by any but the way to which I am accustomed.”

“At least,” cried the Archbishop, “do not attempt to proceed till I have endeavoured to calm the people.”

A bitter smile curled the lip of the President, who well knew that prelate to be the instigator of half the sedition which took place in the city; but he replied, with a low bow, "Well, well, my very good Lord, go and give them the word, by all means;" and, almost as soon as De Retz had left him, he again began to move towards the door. Several of the more popular amongst the officers surrounded him as he advanced, in order to protect him; and Monsieur de Villardin, placing himself on his right hand, bade me go on immediately before, and do what I thought best to assist in clearing the way.

"You seem to have great confidence in your page, Monsieur le Duc," said the President, in a calm, easy tone.

"You will see whether I have not cause, sir," replied the Duke; "but let me beseech you not to utter one word, either good or bad, till you are safe in your own dwelling."

It is a certain fact, that to teach people that we expect great things from them is the best of all ways to cause them to use great exertions;

and the words that I overheard at once made me determine to leave nothing undone that could show my zeal or activity. The rest of the popular nobles and lawyers now approached to protect the other deputies, and thus we advanced to the door. When we were close to it, the *huissier* threw it open, and a sight certainly somewhat appalling presented itself. The outer hall was filled to suffocation with a dense mass of ill-favoured vagabonds, who presented themselves, with fury in their eyes and weapons in their hands, shouting all sorts of imprecations upon the deputies, upon Mazarin, and upon the court. They were led by a ruined advocate called Du Boisle, who was almost as ragged as his followers, and equally well furnished with arms. Indeed, the combination of swords, guns, and daggers, with rags and tatters, had a very strange effect to the eye when it first lighted upon the multitude, which presented the aspect of a strong force of armed beggars.

However, we moved on directly towards the opposite door ; and as all looks were turned upon the parliament, none upon me, I advanced,

keeping a step before the President, till I almost touched the front rank man, in the centre of the crowd. He showed not the slightest disposition to move out of the way; and, although I kept my hand upon my dagger, I thought it might be as well to try mild means first; and, therefore, setting my heel upon his toes, I gave them a gentle squeeze, which made him start back, roaring, upon those behind him. The tumult, was still so great, that the cry of pain he uttered passed almost unnoticed, while his rush back made those behind him retreat also, so that a passage was cleared for us half way through the hall. We lost no time in taking advantage of this favourable circumstance; but, before we had proceeded far, Du Boisle threw himself in the way of the President, and addressed him in language which at once showed why his oratory was so much more successful in a mob than in a court of justice. As his harangue was rather lengthy, and a crowd, like damp hay, always heats itself by standing close packed together, I soon saw brandishing of weapons, and caught a sight of two or

three men mounting upon the benches at the back, and calmly taking aim, with their muskets, at various persons in our little party. It therefore seemed necessary to bring the advocate's oration to a conclusion; and as he was so near the President, as sometimes to take him by the robe, I easily got in behind him, and catching his coat, so as to throw him over amongst the people, I tripped up his heels, in the very fury of his declamation. My size, of course, greatly contributed to my success, and also shielded me from notice and retribution; and in the confusion which followed, the President and his companions pushed forward, and descended the great staircase in safety.

The crowd without were not prepared for our issuing forth without any notice from their friends within, and thus we got a considerable start of them, which enabled us to convey the President to his house unhurt. Our movements, however, were soon perceived: the multitude followed, shouting imprecations upon us; and as we endeavoured to disperse, after having accomplished our purpose, a thousand scenes of confusion and

brutality ensued. What became of the other nobles and counsellors, I did not see. Monsieur de Villardin turned again towards the *palais* to find his grooms and his horses ; but as he had made himself one of the most conspicuous in defending the President, he was surrounded and attacked by a party of butchers, who threw him down upon the pavement. I was three steps behind : one of his assailants knelt over him with a poniard in his hand, shouting, " Death to the Mazarin !" and as long practice in cutting throats seemed to have rendered him expert and quick, it is probable that ere I could have come up to afford any assistance Monsieur de Villardin would have lost his life, on the very first day of my attendance upon him. At that moment, however, a young cavalier of not more than four or five and twenty years of age, followed by two or three servants, dashed in amongst the butchers, received in his own arm the blow of the dagger which was intended for the Duke's throat, and cleared the space round him.

At the same time, though he was sharply wounded, he exclaimed, with the utmost good humour, "What! gentlemen, are you going to kill your friends? This is no Mazarin! This is one of the generals. Do you not remember Monsieur de Villardin?" It is astonishing how few words will convince a mob of any thing under the sun. The butchers looked utterly confounded when they heard that they had just been engaged in the laudable employment of assaulting one of the generals of their own armies, though they were told so by a person of whom they apparently knew as little. It was quite sufficient for them that some one said so; and a few more words from the Duke himself, who had by this time regained his feet, finished the impression, and sent them away to assault somebody else with as much reason.

As soon as we were left alone, the Duke turned to his deliverer, and expressed his gratitude for the service he had received. "It would be a shame to me," he added, after his first thanks had been poured forth, "if I were to

remain one moment longer ignorant of the name of one to whom I am so deeply indebted."

"I can well believe that you have forgot me," answered the young gentleman, "for you have not seen me for seven or eight years; which at my time of life effects a great change; but you cannot have forgotten the name of Charles de Mesnil, your nearest neighbour, I believe, in Britany."

"Good Heaven, my dear Count, is it possible?" exclaimed Monsieur de Villardin: "I had, indeed, forgot you; but you were merely a boy when I last saw you. You are changed indeed. I never thought to see you such a height. You are taller by full two inches than your father was. Gracious Heaven! but you are bleeding," he added, remarking the wound in his arm.

"Oh, it is a mere nothing," answered the other; "I will seek some surgeon and have it dressed."

"Nowhere but in my house," replied Monsieur de Villardin: "call up my horses. Are those yours standing yonder, Count?"

The reply was in the affirmative; and the young cavalier added, that seeing Monsieur de Villardin coming out of the *palais*, he had followed on foot to claim acquaintance with him.

I was not long in finding the grooms; and the two gentlemen having mounted, we rode home, after having spent a morning as full of bustle as even I could wish.

A surgeon was instantly sent for; and the young cavalier's wound having been dressed, he was presented by Monsieur de Villardin to his lady as the son of an old friend and the saviour of his life. What passed further I do not know; but the day closed, and I felt myself very well contented with my situation.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER supping with the pages, whose meals were taken in a separate chamber, I enquired of the old major-domo, who I found was to be my oracle in the house, whether the Duke was likely to require my attendance upon him during the course of the evening; and, learning that I might absent myself in security, I told my old adviser that I should go out into the streets of Paris, and take a stroll through the city, which I had not seen since I left it with Lord Masterton many months before. The good old man gave me a great many sage and prudent cautions as to my behaviour; but, at the same time, having a billet to send to his nephew, one Jacques Marlot, a printer, who lived upon the Key of the Goldsmiths, he did not at all oppose my expedition, but, on the contrary, requested me to deliver the note as I went.

I willingly undertook the task, and sallied forth full of glad thoughts, and well disposed

to be pleased with every thing that a great city could present.

To tell the truth, my freedom from the irksome restraint and wearisome application which my late studies demanded, made me feel very much like a bird escaped from its cage, and I walked along through the streets of Paris far happier than if I had been lord of one half of the universe. That capital, nevertheless, was not, perhaps, one of the best schools in which a boy who, like myself, had run on far beyond his years in the race of life, could complete his education. Always the great emporium of vice and debauchery, Paris, in its present state, offers but a faint picture of its former self. The license of every kind that then existed in the city no tongue can tell nor pen can describe. Every thing the most sacred had become a jest. Every moral tie was broken, without shame or care; and never did liberty of speech and action arrive at the consummation of a total demoralisation of the whole people more completely than it had done, by this time, in the French capital. It luckily happened,

however, that, though doubtless I might have found plenty to initiate me into all sorts of mysteries which I had better not have known, I was too young for the sort of instruction I might otherwise have received, and my nature was too quick and vehement to take pleasure in vice without passion.

All that I found then to amuse me in the streets of Paris was the gaiety, the bustle, and the liveliness of the people, the witty ribaldry of their songs and jests, their easily excited merriment, and their extravagant grimaces. All this certainly pleased and interested me; and I met with many a sight to attract my attention and arrest my steps as I walked on to the Quai des Orfèvres. However, I at length arrived there; and, having discovered the dwelling of Jacques Marlot, I went in and delivered his uncle's note.

He was a little, gay, joyful-looking man, not in the least resembling the worthy major-domo, but with a face not unlike the busts of Socrates, if we can conceive the countenance of the philosopher covered over with a florid and

somewhat wine-imbued skin, and lighted up with two sparkling small black eyes, full of unquenchable fire and malice.

At the time that I entered he was busily engaged, though in total solitude, in despatching the goodly form of a fat roasted capon, which he took care to bathe in repeated draughts from a tankard of warm wine which stood in his chimney corner. He received me with the sort of gay civility, which his whole demeanour bespoke; and, opening his uncle's note, grinned merrily at the contents; observing that his relation warned him to beware of printing any thing against the court, as the parliament and the generals were all racing against each other to see which should make peace fastest.

"*Ma foi*," he added, "I will make my peace as they have made theirs, with arms in my hand;" and, setting me down a cup, he insisted my staying to drink with him, which, after having once tasted his potations, I felt very well inclined to do. It struck me, perhaps, as a little extraordinary that a poor printer, whose trade was not at that time the most lucrative in

Paris, should be able to afford rich Burgundy, and to feed upon fat capon ; but I soon found that, being of a very unscrupulous nature, Master Jacques Marlot obtained large prices for printing all those defamatory libels against Mazarin, the Queen, and the whole court, which then formed the amusement and the reproach of the city. It was his rule never to enquire who the authors were, provided they paid him largely. The more unceremonious the wit and biting the satire, the more it agreed with the tastes of the printer himself ; and many a noble, and, I believe I might add, many a reverend pen, poured forth its gall from under the mantle of Jacques Marlot.

My promptitude in catching his *bon mots*, my readiness in replying to them, my English accent, and my insular notions, as he called them, all seemed to please and to amuse the printer much ; and after having, with a rueful glance, divided the last drop in the flagon equally between himself and me, he invited me cordially to come back and see him again in a few days at the same hour, which I did not fail

to do more than once ; and many a merry laugh have we had together at the follies and the vices of persons of every rank, class, and condition in the state. Indeed there was such a strange mixture of the cynic, the stoic, and the epicurean, in the whole life and conduct of Jacques Marlot, that I could not help looking upon him as a great philosopher.

Whether any one, who by chance may read these pages, will coincide in my opinion, I cannot tell ; but every one shall have an opportunity of judging ; for this casual acquaintance, formed under such very common-place circumstances, went on into after years, and followed me through many a strange scene to distant parts of the land. Those scenes, however, will, themselves, require too long detail for me to pause upon our less interesting interviews ; though the conversation of Jacques Marlot would, at the time I speak of, have formed no bad jest-book for the Fronde ; and on that very night I heard more *bons mots* and anecdotes in half an hour than had met my ear for many a day before.

On my return home, I found a neat small room, not far from the apartments of the good major-domo, prepared as my lodging; and by the time I had half undressed myself, in order to go to bed, I was surprized to see the door open, and Monsieur de Villardin himself enter the room. As his brow was somewhat grave and stern, I imagined that he had come to chide me for my absence during the evening; and I instantly began to feel a spirit of rebellion at the very thought, partly engendered by my old habits of independence, partly by the sense of having in a degree recovered it anew. To my good young lord, whom I had lately left, I had been bound by ties of affection and gratitude, which would have made me do any thing to please him, and which caused me to submit to his orders or to his rebuke with patience and good-will. Such, however, was not the case in regard to Monsieur de Villardin, at least as yet; and I determined to show him that, though I was perfectly willing to give him every sort of attendance when he required it, yet that I looked upon the rest of my time as at

my own disposal. I resolved to let him know also, that, though the fortunes of my family had been for some time at a low ebb, I had as gentle blood in my veins as he had ; and, in short, I was prepared to be as saucy and impertinent, I doubt not, as any wild, ungovernable, and hot-headed boy could be, when, to my surprise, he began upon quite a different topic, without taking the slightest notice of my late absence.

Setting down the taper that he carried, he threw himself into a large chair that stood by the fire, and bidding me put on my vest again, as he had a good deal to say to me, he continued, “ Well, my page, we have begun together, this morning, as well as I could wish, and I find that the character I have received with you does you no more than justice : I doubt not that every hour will increase my regard for you ; and I shall take care that you have every opportunity of distinguishing yourself that you could desire through life.”

This discourse, so different from that I had expected, was certainly very pleasing to me ; but at the same time I had learned too much

of the world not to understand that it was a prelude to something else, which perhaps might not be so gratifying ; and, consequently, I answered with the words which mean less than any others in the world, "Your Lordship is very good."

"Nevertheless," proceeded Monsieur de Vil-lardin, "it is but right that we should clearly understand upon what terms we are to go on together. Now," he continued, assuming a frank and easy air,—which when you see men do you may be perfectly sure that they are cheating themselves, and are trying to cheat you also,— "now, I am not in the least a suspicious man ; far from it ; by nature I am quite the contrary ; nevertheless, I think it but right that every master of a large household like this should be thoroughly acquainted with all that takes place in his dwelling. Of course you will have a great many opportunities of observing what passes in my family, and I must require of you to be frank and free with me on all such subjects."

I did not like the matter at all, for I understood very well what he meant ; and I was sure

that, although he felt some difficulty in explaining himself at first, he would not be long before he found an opportunity of doing so completely. However, I thought my usual straightforward way was the best, and I answered, "I am always frank and free, my Lord. I say what I think to every body, and of every body."

"So I have heard, so I have heard," said the Duke; "and I must desire that you do so, particularly towards me, remembering that I look upon a person who would see his master wronged as fully more culpable than the person who wrongs him."

"My Lord," I replied, seeing that we must come to the point at last, "I certainly never will see you wronged without endeavouring to right you; and if I cannot do it in my own person, I shall hold myself bound to tell you, in order that you may do it. I am sure your Lordship does not wish me to become a spy upon any body, nor would it have any effect if you did; for I would not remain in the house of any one half an hour who was to require such a thing of me."

It is wonderful how many things people will do, from the very name of which they would shrink with shame if put into plain terms; and though I am perfectly convinced that Monsieur de Villardin, — from some of those vague and visionary doubts which haunt the minds of suspicious men, the spectres of a diseased imagination, — would have liked me to watch all the events of any importance that took place in his house, and make him a full report thereof; yet he immediately testified great disgust at the very name of a spy, and replied, “Far from me be such a thought for a moment, as to propose to you, young man, any thing mean or dishonourable. I know you are of gentle blood, and have served well in a noble cause; and therefore, though I hold you bound by your duty, as you are also by the promise you have just made, to give me instant information if you see any one attempt to wrong me in any way, yet, of course, I do not desire you to become a spy upon those around you.”

I saw evidently that he caught at the promise I had made, and, to tell the truth, I was sorry

that I had made it. Not that I did not consider myself bound by the station I held in his family to do exactly as I had said; but I was a little afraid that my good lord might construe my words rather more liberally than I had intended them to be understood. As they were spoken, however, there was no help for it; and though I repeated over again,—to make the engagement as clear and definite as possible,—that I would never see him wronged without endeavouring to right him, or without giving him an opportunity of doing so himself, still I was afraid he might be inclined to exact, under that promise, more than I should be inclined to concede. I found indeed, afterwards, that he himself very well understood, that there was another way of making it, a point of honour with me to do as he desired, which was by loading me with benefits, and bestowing on me that confidence, which would have rendered it an act of the greatest ingratitude on my part to conceal from him any attempt to injure him.

Satisfied with the promise I had made, and

determined with regard to the course he would pursue towards me, he dropped that part of the conversation there; but made me give him a long history of my family and my adventures; told me that he had been well acquainted with Lord Wilmerton, my mother's father, some fifteen years before; and ended by giving me an assurance, which he nobly accomplished, that thenceforth he would treat me more as his son than as his attendant. He then took up the light and quitted the chamber, leaving me to meditate over the future, which, notwithstanding the promises he had made, and which I fully believed he would keep, still presented some clouds and shadows that I certainly could have wished away.

After this conversation I was almost continually with Monsieur de Villardin, especially as, in all those exercises in which noblemen of that day held themselves bound to have their pages well instructed, I was already as skilful as necessary, and, consequently, had scarcely any other occupation than that of attending upon the Duke. In the pages' room matters soon assumed the state into which I could have

wished them to fall. Master Gaspard de Belleville, the eldest of my three companions, submitted to necessity with a somewhat bad grace; and the two younger, as soon as they had become reconciled to me as their new comrade, and accustomed to my manners and accent, sought shelter under my protection from the tyranny of their former despot. The old major-domo ere long acquired a great affection for me; and as I was quite willing, from the novelty of the thing, to be petted as much as any one pleased, he made quite a favourite of me, providing me with all those little comforts and luxuries which the chief domestic of a great house has always at his disposal.

Monsieur de Villardin himself was, as Lord Langleigh had said, a man who let no moment slip past him unmarked by some event; and, with a spirit of restless activity,—not unlike what was my own at that time,—he took part in every thing that was going on. By day he was either busy in the intrigues of his faction, or in the field with his troops; and even at night he was very often as busy in beating up the ene-

my's quarters, or in stirring up the Parisians to some new absurdity. In all his expeditions I formed one of his attendants: I had constant employment, — and both at home and abroad was as happy as I could wish.

This state of things, however, could not, of course, last for ever; and had no other circumstance occurred to interrupt its duration, the gradual recovery of Monsieur de Villardin from the madness of the Fronde would ultimately have put an end to it; but an incident soon happened, to which I shall now turn, and which eventually occasioned my departure from Paris rather faster than I approved of. The first treaty of peace which had been signed was indignantly rejected, as we have seen, by the parliament, the populace, and the generals; and the deputies were again sent back to treat at Ruel. During their conferences, as an armistice had been refused, Monsieur de Villardin and others took care to amuse Mazarin by frequent excursions, which sometimes were pushed to the gates of St. Germain. Mazarin, always timid, made concessions in proportion to his

alarm ; but, at the same time, as he loved not the sort of arms with which the Parisian generals fought him, he took care to combat them with weapons peculiarly his own. Three fresh armies, as I have said, were directing their course towards Paris in support of the parliament. In regard to the one promised from Normandy, the Cardinal tampered with the general, the Duke de Longueville, and delayed its march. In regard to the other, commanded by Turenne, knowing the chief to be incorruptible, Mazarin corrupted the men. The whole army was literally bought ; and when its general was about to begin his advance upon the capital, he was at once abandoned by his troops. The third, consisting of Spaniards, the Cardinal well knew would not march without the others ; and having thus placed himself on more equal terms with the Parisian leaders, he took advantage of the consternation which these events produced to press the treaty of peace, which was soon after concluded and ratified by all parties, but the populace, and one or two of the leaders who had too great a love of faction,

in the abstract, to yield to any measure calculated to put it down. Thus, then, the war was brought to an end; but still so turbulent and disorganised was the state of Paris, that the court dared not set foot within its walls; and, while the people were committing every sort of excess, and the most scandalous libels upon Mazarin and the royal family were every day published, the parliament, in order to signalise their zeal for their new allies, the court, proceeded against the authors and printers with the most tyrannical severity.

Of course my good friend Jacques Marlot could not escape, and I one day found old Jerome Laborde, the major-domo, in great affliction on account of his nephew, who had been arrested that morning for the publication of the famous attack upon the queen, called "La Custode." It so happened that, by my master's permission, I passed the two following days at St. Maur, with Lord Masterton, who was kindness itself towards me; and on the third morning I was sent by the Duke, immediately after my return, to gain some intelligence in

the Faubourg St. Germain. As I came back, I saw an immense crowd advancing rapidly towards the Place de Grève, and crying, "Honte! honte! Aux Mazarins! aux Mazarins!" Running my eye a little forward, I soon perceived that the cause of the tumult originated in the procession of the criminal lieutenant and his archers towards the place of execution, whither they were carrying some condemned criminal to make his last public appearance in the most disagreeable manner. As it was evident that the principal personage on the scene was in favour with the public, I hastened forward to obtain a glance, when, to my horror and astonishment, I beheld the jovial face of my poor acquaintance, Jacques Marlot, still as jovial as ever, notwithstanding his endeavours to assume a sober and sedate demeanour under the very grave circumstances in which he was placed.

Every sort of mad enterprise was then as common as a hedge sparrow, and some evil demon put it in my head to rescue the unhappy printer from the hands of Monsieur le Bourreau.

Amongst the mob were a great number of

printers' devils, booksellers' boys, and other shopmen; and speaking a word or two to those who seemed the most zealous, our plan was quickly arranged, and spread like wild-fire amongst the people. The crowd was every minute increasing; their cries and execrations were gaining new strength at each vociferation; and I saw Grani, the criminal lieutenant, turn his head more than once to scan the aspect of the very unwelcome train which now accompanied him. He soon, however, reached the gibbet in the Place de Grève, and poor Marlot turned, — with a face out of which even his rueful situation could not banish entirely habitual fun, — to pronounce, as usual, his last oration: — “ My friends, my friends,” he cried, “ take warning! See what comes of a Mazarinade!”

The name acted as a watchword, and the moment it was pronounced, a well-directed volley of stones was let fly at the criminal lieutenant and his archers, who were not prepared for that sort of attack. One of the men was knocked down; the rest were thrown into confusion; and, taking advantage of the moment, we pushed on

and charged the panic-struck officers of justice.* Some of the guards were felled to the earth; some of them fled as fast as their legs would carry them. The criminal lieutenant was beaten severely, and glad to escape with his life; and Jacques Marlot was in an instant set at liberty, amongst the shouts and gratulations of the populace.

Feeling that I had perhaps done a foolish thing, and — from a knowledge of the delicate situation in which the Duke stood with the court — more apprehensive of the consequences to

* The Cardinal de Retz mentions in his Memoirs, that two criminals were rescued, and seems to imply that they were saved from the gallows together. Joly, whose work forms a running commentary upon that of De Retz, shows that the Cardinal spoke of Jacques Marlot, the printer, as one of these culprits, and mentions his crime,—though the punishment of death for writing, or rather for printing, a libel, may seem a little severe. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that "*La Custode*," a copy of which exists in the British Museum, is a most dirty and scurrilous attack upon the Queen; but still, the tyranny of the whole proceeding against this unhappy man seemed to justify the hatred which the people conceived, about this time, towards the great body of Parisian lawyers.

him than to myself, I made as much haste as I could to get away quietly, without even staying to congratulate the printer on his deliverance. As we had completely put the archers to flight, and had quite satisfied them with their airing in the Place de Grève for one day, no one opposed me on my way home, and I found Monsieur de Villardin in the hall, ready to go out on horseback, accompanied by the page I have mentioned under the name of Gaspard de Belleville. I had generally found it a good plan throughout my little life, whenever I had committed a fault which I was conscious might affect some other persons, to make them acquainted with it immediately, that they might be upon their guard against the consequences; and, following this rule, I at once went up to Monsieur de Villardin, and informed him that I believed I had done a very foolish thing.

“It is half repaired by acknowledging it so frankly,” replied the Duke; “but what is it, my boy, that we may do the best to remedy it?”

Without farther circumlocution I informed

him of the facts, which seemed to startle him a good deal.

"This is unpleasant indeed," he replied, "but in truth, I cannot find in my heart to be angry with you; for I doubt not I should have done just the same: and what the master would do, he cannot well blame in the page. We will hope, however, that you have not been recognised. Nevertheless," he added in a low tone, "have what clothes you may need packed up, and be ready to set out at a minute's notice; for in these times no one can tell one moment what they may have to do the next."

I followed my lord's orders to the letter; and as soon as he had gone out, cast every thing that I had that was well worth carrying, into two large saddle-bags. In this occupation I proceeded most zealously, not having the slightest inclination to act as substitute for Jacques Marlot in the elevated station which the criminal judge of the Tournelle Court had destined him to fill that very morning. The thoughts of such a consummation to my enterprises disgusted me considerably, as, of all deaths under the

sun, I had the greatest objection to that of hanging; and the idea thereof occupied me so completely, that it was not till I had finished the preparation of my saddle-bags, that I be-thought me how much interested the old major-domo might feel in the mutual adventures which his nephew and myself had gone through that morning. As soon as the idea crossed my mind, however, I took my way to the old man's apartments; and, as he had heard of his nephew's condemnation, but not of his deliverance, I found him in a state of great agitation and distress.

"Cheer up, cheer 'up, Monsieur Jerome La-borde," I said, as soon as I had obtained admission; "cheer up; things are not so bad as you suppose."

The old man shook his head, but I went on and told him that I had heard from certain authority that his nephew had been delivered by the hands of the people. He was at first incredulous, and although I could have given him stronger proof than mere hearsay, that what I asserted was correct, I did not think it necessary or right to make any one acquainted with the

share I had borne in the rescue, except my lord and master : I added, however, so many assurances, that the old man at length began to have some faith in my statement, and went out himself to ascertain the facts. I did not see him afterwards till night ; but I was very well assured that he must soon receive satisfactory confirmation of the good tidings which I had brought him.

CHAPTER X.

SHORTLY after Monsieur de Villardin's return on the day of which I have just been speaking, I received notice that I should be required to accompany him in the evening to a great supper at the house of the Duke de Bouillon. As I was beginning, at that time, from one circumstance or another, to imagine that I was in no degree uglier than my fellow mortals, to find out that good looks were prized even in a page, and that a handsome person was not shown to less advantage by appearing in becoming apparel, I took care that the finest of my wardrobe should be displayed on the present occasion, where I was sure of seeing, and in some sort mingling with, all that was bright, and noble, and beautiful, in the French capital.

Although self-conceit has made many a man very comfortable through life, I do believe that the peculiar modification of the same feeling

which is generally called vanity, seldom, if ever, produces any thing but disappointment. We did not arrive at the Hôtel de Bouillon till more than one half of the company had assembled ; and, though the scene was certainly as splendid as youth, beauty, wealth, gaiety, good taste and grace, could render it, my pleasure was of course confined to seeing others, without attracting the slightest attention myself. Confounded with the other pages, of whom there was an immense profusion, nobody, in all probability, ever saw me except worthy Monsieur de Vitray, who recognised me instantly, and spoke a few words to me as he passed.

As is usually the case, I believe, all the visitors who appeared there, came with their own thoughts and purposes, and gave not one idea to any body else, except as they were connected with their designs and pleasures. From the extraordinary twist too, that every thing had got in France, at that time, the general order of all things seemed inverted. The bright, and the beautiful, and the young of the other sex gave up the whole of their conversation to

politics and factious intrigue ; while cunning statesmen, deep lawyers, and reverend divines, old warriors, and grey-headed politicians, universally devoted themselves to making love to every body they should not have made love to.

I came away, thinking a Parisian party very dull ; and sitting in the *portière* of the Duke's coach, who carried along with him one or two of his particular friends in the body of the vehicle, I ruminated over my disappointment ; too young, indeed, to investigate metaphysically the sensations which I experienced, but quite old enough to resolve that I would never again expect any one to take notice of me, either for my fine clothes or my good looks.

When we reached home, Monsieur de Villardin's friends descended and went in with him, to pay their respects to the Duchess, who, having been slightly indisposed, had remained at home. He, of course, accompanied them into the hall, but, as he passed me, he paused a moment to say in an under voice, " Do not go to bed." There was a good deal of anxiety in his eye, and emphasis in his tone, which made

me attach to his words a greater degree of importance than they seemed at first to bear. Nor was I wrong in my interpretation, for in less than half an hour the old major-domo called me out of the page's room, — in which I had been sitting with Gaspard de Belleville, whose spirits I had remarked to be extravagantly high, — and led me by the hand to his own apartment.

When he had got me there, and shut the door, good Jerome Laborde folded me in his arms, and the tears actually rose in his eyes. “ I have bad news for you, my son,” he said ; “ and unfortunately it happens that your kindness to my nephew is likely to prove your ruin. My lord the Duke has just been telling me that it was you who saved my poor nephew, and that the criminal lieutenant and his myrmidons have found you out.”

Of course the first announcement of such a fact was not particularly agreeable to me ; but, as I came hastily to reflect upon my fate, and to think that I should again be obliged to scamper off, and do the best I could for myself in the world, there seemed something so absurd

in the sort of perversity with which fate destined me to be a wanderer, that I could not help laughing, notwithstanding the difficulties of my situation.

"You laugh, my son," cried the old man in great astonishment, "but I can tell you the business is a very serious one, and that you might chance to be shut up for life in the Bastille."

"If that is the case," replied I, "the matter is serious indeed. I thought they would only have hanged me; and I have been so accustomed to risk hanging every day of my life that it was nothing new; but, as to spending my whole existence in a prison, that is a very different affair; and therefore, good Monsieur Jerome, I shall get out of the way directly, leaving you to make my excuses to my lord, for going without asking his permission."

"You are too quick, my son, you are too quick," cried the old man; "it was the Duke himself who told me but now to speak to you. Do not suppose that he intends to leave you without protection. No, no, he is a kind-

hearted man, though quick and jealous in his disposition from a boy; and he bade me tell you that he would have defended you to the last for the act you have committed, even had it not been in favour of my nephew; but, that as it was so, he will defend you more eagerly still. He thinks, however, that for your present safety, you had better quit Paris as soon as possible; and, as he intended to send some one to his estates in Britany to-morrow, he will give you the commission, and order a groom to accompany you and show you the road."

"I am quite ready," replied I; "there is nothing to be done but to saddle the horses."

"Never did I see so hasty a boy," cried the old man; "how will you get out of the gates, I should like to know, when they are closed as firmly as locks and chains can make them."

"I would get over the walls," replied I, smiling.

"And the horses?" said the old man, with a smile: "no, no, my son, you must follow the plans laid down for you by my lord, who knows this country, at least, better than you do. When

you have every thing ready, he says, go to bed, and sleep for two or three hours: rise twenty minutes before the dawn, and you will find horses, and the packet he intends you to take, all ready prepared for you. By the time you get to the gates, they will be opened, and you will have nothing else to do but to ride on as fast as possible, till you reach my lord's castle of the Pré Vallée. Remain there quietly till you hear from him, and, in a few weeks, he will have negotiated your pardon with the court."

This plan was, of course, one that both suited my wishes and provided for my safety, better than any I could have laid out for myself. It offered me the prospect, too, of new scenes and adventures of a nature somewhat less appalling than those which might lead me into a dungeon for life; and I consequently proceeded to put it into execution with every feeling of joy and gratitude. Good Jerome Laborde undertook to have me called at the appointed hour, and, accustomed from infancy to take repose at any

scattered moments that offered the possibility of doing so, I laid down, and was soon asleep.

When I was called in the morning I found, much to my surprise, that Monsieur de Villardin was himself up ; and, as I afterwards discovered, had risen at that early hour solely on my account ; a mark of kindness and interest that touched my heart the more, because it was totally unexpected. After receiving from his own hands a packet of letters for his different farmers and receivers in Britany, accompanied by the assurance that he would leave no means untried to procure my pardon, I took my leave, and, descending to the court-yard, found the groom who was to accompany me, holding two strong horses, on one of which already appeared the saddle-bags containing my wealth and apparel. Old Jerome Laborde was also there, ready to embrace me before I took my departure ; and ere we set out, he did not forget to burden the groom with a *bissac* loaded with various Parisian delicacies, to console me on my journey.

The Duke had strictly enjoined me to avoid all towns in the neighbourhood of Paris, and to make my first day's ride the longest and the most rapid of the whole expedition ; and, consequently, when once we had passed the gates, which we were permitted to do without question, we set spurs to our beasts, and never drew a rein for twenty miles. By this time, however, I began to feel in security from the pursuit of any thing but hunger, which was now pressing me hard, and, after riding on a few miles further, we saw a small open wood in the neighbourhood of Epéron, into which we retired for the purpose of lightening good Jerome Laborde's *bissac* of some of its savoury contents. The groom, who, like most of Monsieur de Villardin's domestics, seemed to be a connoisseur in the good things of this life, spread forth the viands on the table cloth afforded by the green grass at the bottom of a gentle slope in the wood, with infinite taste ; and the fine *pâté* of turkey and truffles which formed the staple of the *bissac*, looked none the worse for its crust having cracked in more than one place

under the jumbling of our ride, suffering the topaz-like jelly to shine forth through the apertures.

Scarcely, however, had I time to help myself to a ponderous slice, and to add thereto a portion of wild boar's face, which exceeded any Hampshire chaw I ever tasted, when I fancied that I heard a low groan quite near. The sound made me start up and look around; but as I could perceive nothing, as hunger was unruly, and as the groom, who by this time was deep in the appropriate worship of the pasty, declared he had heard nothing, I sat down again, and in one attack very nearly demolished the slice I had first assigned to myself. I then added a draught of excellent Burgundy from a flask which the *bissac* also afforded; but I now certainly began to think that our regale had made the hamadryads envious, for another distinct groan followed, evidently proceeding from a large oak tree hard by, and the moment after the body of a man appeared, cautiously descending from the higher boughs. As he swarmed down the trunk, tightly embracing its rugged circum-

ference with his arms, which operation was rendered somewhat difficult by a certain degree of obesity in his own person, he every now and then turned his head partly over his shoulder, as if to obtain a sight of the good things before us, exclaiming, as he did so, "It is irresistible! — philosophy is in vain — I resign myself to my fate!"

The next minute his feet touched the ground, and turning round with a sort of joyous pirouette, he gave me a full view of my acquaintance, Jacques Marlot. I confess that a suspicion of the identity of this genius of the oak and the *ci-devant* printer had crossed my mind, as he descended the tree, from various peculiar points in his rotund conformation; but it appeared that on his part, although he had obtained a thorough perception of what we had been eating and drinking, his bird's eye view in the tree had not enabled him to see enough of our faces to recognise my person, for his first exclamation was, as he turned round, "Gentlemen, I am an hungred; and if ye do not give me food, ye have committed a heinous sin in displaying that

delicious *pâté* before me. — Ye Gods! what do I see?" he continued, as his eye lighted full upon me: "My phoenix of pages — my master Jean l'Anglais! My deliverer from a more elevated station than ever I coveted! Let me embrace thee in token of thanks for my abasement."

As the best welcome I could give the unfortunate printer, I made him partake liberally of our fare, and suffered him to cheer his heart with our flask, till half his woes were forgotten. While he went on, which was nearly till pasty disappeared and bottle sounded empty, I told him that I was now suffering on his account, and explained to him my situation. At first, his whole soul being engrossed in one occupation, he seemed to feel but little for my misadventures; but as soon as he had a moment's leisure, he looked shocked; and when he had finished, and could absolutely eat no more, he expressed, gracefully enough, both his gratitude for my services, and his grief for the inconveniences to which they had exposed me. He then told me that as soon as he was out of the hands of the archers the day before, he had taken leave of his

friendly mob of deliverers, and trusting to nothing but his own legs, had made the best of his way out of Paris.

“As soon as I was fairly beyond the gates,” he added, “I set off running again, as hard as I could; and when I could run no more, I walked; and when I could walk no longer, I stood still, which was exactly on the spot where I now am. I had nothing to eat; and you there behold my beverage,” he continued, pointing to a small stream that danced before us. “I christened it, however, *vin blanc d'Epernon*; and though it was not quite so good as the *vin blanc d'Epernay*, it quenched my thirst; and having dug up as many pignuts as I could find, I mounted yonder oak with all the agility of a light diet, and soothed myself to sleep by comparing myself to Diogenes. How I should have passed over this day, I do not know; for I dared not visit my house, which, doubtless, was also pillaged long ago by the ministers of justice; and you may easily conceive that the archers of the criminal lieutenant do not suffer those who are placed

under their protection to do so foolish a thing as go to the gallows with money in their pockets. However, I never despair, doubting not now, as heretofore, to make something out of whatever lot dame Fortune chooses to throw. Nor has she ever been unfavourable to those who trust to her bounty; for what can prove her kindness more strongly than sending you here for my relief and consolation?"

I complimented Maître Jacques upon his philosophy, which was much of the same quality as my own, and begged him to keep the wild boar's cheek, which had suffered less in the encounter than the pasty, as another token of fortune's favour. I found, however, that he was very desirous of accompanying us on our journey, and talked of my horse being strong enough to carry two. The groom also seconded his proposal in a way that I thought somewhat extraordinary; but, nevertheless, at the risk of appearing selfish, I put a decided negative upon it, not so much upon my own account as because I thought that it might place my lord in very

unpleasant circumstances, if the criminal who had just been rescued from the gallows, and the page who had helped to rescue him, were found riding to his estates in Britany, guided by one of his own grooms.

I represented, however, to Jacques Marlot, that in all probability the officers of justice were after us both by this time; and that, although in some cases union was security, in this instance our best hope of escape lay in separating, especially as it was more than probable that the knowledge of my being attached to Monsieur de Villardin might make the archers follow upon the very road I was pursuing.

This last argument was conclusive with the printer, and as, thanks to the bounty of Lord Masterton, I was still furnished with more money than I knew how to employ, I added thirty crowns to the breakfast I had given my acquaintance, and left him to continue his journey full of renewed hope and gratitude.

The groom who accompanied me seemed to take a greater interest in Jacques Marlot than the length of their intercourse warranted, and

enquired very particularly into the route he was likely to pursue ; but the printer, according to the good English proverb, was too old a bird to be taken by the chaff which my guide spread before him ; and with a cunning smile evaded his questions, whispering to me as he embraced me at parting, " Beware of your guide."

Early — too early had I learned to distrust my fellow-creatures, a lesson which we have unfortunately too frequent opportunities of repeating in our course through the world ever to forget, when once the sweet confidence of innocence and inexperience, like the bloom upon ripe fruit, has been brushed away by the first touch of the polluting world. I had seen fully enough, however, to doubt the faith of my present conductor, and I resolved to watch him closely as we proceeded, not well knowing what particular line his roguery might take, but suspecting strongly that he was not the most honest of servants, nor likely to prove the most infallible of guides.

It luckily so happened that the saddle-bags containing my stores of all kinds were upon my

own horse, and therefore I possessed the power of directing all our movements, as well as the right of doing so, which my station and my lord's commands conferred. Nor was it at all unpleasant, I confess, to reflect that, in the event of any dispute arising between myself and my companion, who had been directed in all respects to consider himself as my servant, I had nothing to do but ride away, and leave him to do the best for himself,— which reflection was the more especially gratifying, as I believed he might obtain a considerable reward by betraying me, and did not much doubt that he had some thoughts of the kind in his own mind.

I showed him, at least, that expedition was part of my plan ; for as soon as we were once more in our saddles, I pushed forward with all speed, and accomplished nearly forty miles more before night. A considerable town lay at the distance of a few miles to our right, and thither my guide strongly recommended me to proceed, lauding to the skies the accommodation we should there meet with ; but I took my own plan, and riding on till I espied a neat cabaret in a village,

halted there, preferring the risk of a bad supper to the risk of an unpleasant lodging.

The next day we proceeded in the same manner, though not at the same rate; taking whatever refreshment we needed at the smallest and most retired places I could find; and though the worthy groom more than once attempted to prove restive, and to treat me as a mere boy, he found that he had to do with one who had managed shrewder men than himself. It soon became apparent that, though our horses were strong and well seasoned to hard work, it would take us rather more than four days to reach the place of our destination; but for the last hundred miles I found my companion much more easily managed, yielding at once to my will with the best grace in the world, which conduct pleased, though it did not deceive me.

Sudden changes, without an apparent cause, always afford very good reasons for suspicion; and it was clear enough that the alteration in the good groom's behaviour had not taken place from any increased reverence for myself.

"Whatever it is he intends to do," I thought,

as I remarked this change in his demeanour, "the fellow has laid out his plan, and thinks it quite secure. He must have fixed, too, upon some spot for executing it towards the end of our journey, since he is so indifferent as to the way we take here. I will watch him well, however, at every mile." This resolution I kept to the letter, never suffering him to be out of my sight for a minute; but nothing suspicious occurred till the close of our fourth day's journey, when he declared, that since I was so fond of hard riding, he thought we might get on to Rennes that night.

I did not exactly know how far it was to Rennes, for had I been aware that it was at the distance of twenty miles, when our horses were already nearly knocked up, I should have concluded that — calculating on my distaste to any thing he proposed — he wanted me to stay where we were, and, therefore, suggested that we should proceed further. I certainly fell into the trap; and simply because he desired to go on, determined to halt at the next village.

When we reached it, the first house I espied

was a neat cabaret, and drawing in my rein I sprang to the ground, announcing my determination of sleeping there. A grin of satisfaction on the groom's face was the first thing that excited suspicion in my mind that I had overreached myself; but the countenance of mine host, who now appeared, confirmed my doubts; and as he spoke to the servant as an old friend, I soon found that I had made a terrible mistake. On enquiring the distance to Rennes, too, and finding that our horses could by no means have accomplished it, I saw that the attempt had been proposed solely to make me do the contrary; and thence deducing that, at this very spot, the consummation of the groom's manœuvres was destined to take place, of course I determined to be all eyes, ears, and understanding.

The landlord's daughter, a very pretty frank-faced brunette of about twenty, attracted by my gay dress, and feeling that kindness which all women experience towards extreme youth, soon came up to me, and in a very short time we were great friends; but I could not attend to half her civil offers of the various sorts of

refreshment that the house afforded, on account of my anxiety to keep watch over the groom. In this endeavour I was tolerably successful for some time, and I do not think he obtained an opportunity of exchanging one word with the landlord, till we had concluded our supper, except, indeed, such as related to the general affairs of Monsieur de Villardin, whose name was well known in that part of the country, and to the state of Paris. All this time, however, I had another subject of anxiety in my saddlebags, which were left up stairs in the chamber assigned to me; and after I had sufficiently refreshed myself, I was tempted thither to see that all was safe, thinking that I should be down again in time to prevent much private conversation.

I was wrong; and on again entering the kitchen I found the places of both the landlord and the groom vacant, while the host's mother sat by the fire dozing, and the pretty brunette was spinning beside her with great eagerness.

As soon as ever I appeared, the latter beckoned me to her, and said in a low voice, "You

are betrayed, *mon pauvre garçon*; but if you would hear how, go out at that back-door, run along at the top of the bank as quietly as you can, and make the best use of your ears."

I instantly followed her advice, and opening the door to which she pointed, soon found myself in the little court of the auberge, which again opened into what seemed the garden of a *guingette*, surrounded on three sides by walls, and on the fourth, which lay to my right hand, flanked by a high cliffy bank that sloped down towards the door at which I stood. It was night, and the moon had not yet risen, but there was still light enough remaining to let me see or rather divine all this, and running up the bank, and along the edge, with as noiseless a foot as possible, I soon heard voices speaking in the garden below me. I crept on as fast as I could and the next moment clearly distinguished the words made use of. The groom was acting the orator as I came up, and proceeded as follows:—

"No, no, that won't do at all, Monsieur Parnac, for if he were to be taken in your house, under my guidance, most likely my good

lord would turn me to the door, if he did not throw me out of the window, and would certainly ruin you here for your pains. You do not know what a man he is — so sharp, if you give him the least cause for suspicion! I do believe he finds out when one is going to do any little trick, even before one knows it oneself. I remember his turning off his chief ecuyer for merely whispering in the street with a maquignon, who was bringing him a horse for sale. No, no, let it be managed my way. Send off some one to-night, and have the officers stationed about the watering place, by Meri, you know. Let them take me too, seemingly, for being in his company; and so my lord's suspicions will be set at rest, and I shall be carried back to Paris too, where I shall get the reward."

"Ay but, Maître Pierre, are you quite sure of the reward?" demanded mine host.

"All I can tell thee, Parnac, is this," replied the groom. "I heard it offered by proclamation, as we were riding home, the evening before I came away. A thousand crowns were

to be given to any one who would deliver up the leader of those that had rescued the criminal, and two thousand crowns to those who would deliver up the criminal himself. I would have done it myself, if I had known at the time that this boy was the person; and I could have managed it easily as we came through the city. But I never found it out, as I tell you, till we met with this Jacques Marlot, and then I heard them talk about it quite as if they were in security."

"Well, well, Pierre, I think thou wilt get thy thousand crowns," answered the landlord, "and they know how to do these things so secretly at the court, that thou mayest get them and not lose thy master's service either; but tell me, what am I to get?"

"Why, of course, I will pay thee for the man and horse sent to the city," replied the groom.

"Ay, but that will not be quite enough," answered mine host, "to pay me for risking your good lord's custom and patronage. Something more! something more! good Peter, or thou mayest ride to Rennes to-night thyself."

"Well," answered Peter, "I will tell you what, Parnac; the officers shall bring him on here, and while we halt to refresh, you and I will have the picking of those saddle-bags of his, in which there are a good thousand crowns besides. If he finds them gone and complains, it will pass for a piece of the archers' handiwork, and no enquiry will be made."

"Ay, now thou speakest reason," answered his respectable friend, "and I will send off directly. At the half-way watering place thou sayest; but at what hour? We must name some hour for the officers to be there."

"Say nine o' the clock," answered the groom; "we shall not be there till eleven; but they must wait, you know, they must wait."

"Well, it shall be done without delay," replied the host, "but now, hie you in, Pierre, for you say the boy is as sharp as your master, and may suspect us. Yet stay; remember, if you fail me about the bags, I will do for you with your lord. So keep faith."

The groom replied at some length, but as their farther conversation seemed likely to

refer alone to their private affairs, I made the best of my way back to the house, and ere either groom or landlord returned, had gained sufficient information from my pretty brunette, in regard to the roads, to serve my purpose for the next day. I found that, at the distance of about four miles from the village, the highway was intersected by another, which led away in the very direction I wished to take. It was neglected, however, and heavy, she said, passing through some wide forest ground, which always affords a bad foundation; and since the new road had been made, she added, few people ever travelled the old one except the couriers for St. Malo, who went that way for the purpose of dropping packets, and sometimes sums of money at various small towns through which it alone passed. It used, she said, to have a bad reputation for robbers, and about three months before, one of the royal messengers had been plundered, but since that time she had heard of no farther outrage.

As she was speaking, the groom came in, and to break off a conversation I did not want

him to hear, I asked him sharply where he had been so long. He replied that he had been tending his horses; and to put him completely off his guard, I ordered them to be at the door exactly at the hour on which I found he had already calculated. He promised to be punctual, and not doubting that he would be so, I soon after retired to bed. Danger of any kind never made me sleep less soundly, but I confess that, on this occasion, it was long before I could close my eyes; but it was self-reproach, not apprehension, kept me awake. I had been twice betrayed into an act of egregious folly during that one journey, and I began to think I was losing the acuteness which had been my most serviceable quality. I could have pardoned myself, perhaps, for suffering the groom to cheat me into staying where we then were; but for babbling myself or suffering Jacques Marlot to babble in the hearing of a third person, I rated myself for a good hour after I was in bed.

CHAP. XI.

I WAS up and watchful early the next morning; for although I had now obtained as much information in regard to my worthy guide's purposes as was necessary to enable me to shape my own plans thereby, I thought it better to prevent him, as far as possible, from organising his scheme more completely with the landlord, and providing against contingencies. By seeing a bespattered horse standing in the yard, and the complacent countenances both of the groom and the landlord, I divined that their messenger had returned from Rennes, or from whatever other town they had sent to in search of officers to apprehend me, and that all their arrangements had hitherto been successful. Trusting, however, that they would find that such calculations, formed without the consent of so principal a party as myself, would be more difficult to execute than they anticipated, I took my breakfast in

great tranquillity, and as soon as the horses were ready, paid my score and set out.

The groom was in great glee, which continued uninterrupted for four good miles of our morning's ride ; but at length I began to see before us the division of the roads, with the finger-post that directed weary travellers towards their destination, and I now prepared myself for the execution of my design. Not knowing whether I might not have a severe struggle to effect it, I felt that my pistols were free in the holsters, and as we came to the carrefour, drew in my rein, and gazed up at the finger-post. There, written in large characters, certainly appeared RENNES! PARIS! pointing either way, to the road towards which our horses' heads were turned, or to that which we had just travelled. On the right-hand board, however, was written ST. MALO, and as the groom was quietly riding on in the direction of Rennes, I shouted, " Holla ! where are you going, good Peter ?"

He came back with a sweet complacent countenance, and told me that he had been going on the road to Rennes, which was the only one we

could follow; but I took the liberty of differing with him in opinion, stating, that I thought the road to St. Malo would do just as well. He assured me that I was mistaken; that it would lead me at least ten miles to the right of the spot towards which my steps ought to be directed; that it was so bad our horses could not travel it; that it was infested by robbers of the worst description; and, in short, that every sort of evil under the sun awaited the unfortunate travellers who obstinately pursued that road.

I listened to the whole detail as calmly and attentively as possible; and then, much to his surprise, I informed him, that I loved robbers, delighted in bad roads, enjoyed a roundabout more than a straightforward track, and was contented to undergo all the evils that he threatened, for the sake of following the path to which I had a fancy. As the matter had now become serious, and the success or failure of his scheme depended upon the next ten steps, the worthy groom took it up *en cavalier*, put on a blustering aspect, stood up in the stirrups with the frown of a Sylla, and told me that he would

submit to such whims no longer, but that go I must on the way which he thought right.

In reply to this I reminded him of one or two things which had occurred to me since I had become attached to Monsieur De Villardin, and in which my opponents had generally been worsted, when our contention came to manual operations. I believe, indeed, that I had established a very tolerable reputation for never suffering any thing of the kind that I undertook to remain unfinished or imperfect; and, as I was both better armed and mounted than himself, my companion was easily convinced that it would be wiser to abandon every thing like compulsory measures towards me. He declared, however, that although he should certainly not attempt to force me to do what he thought right, he would take very good care not to follow me on such a road as that which I was determined to pursue.

Under some circumstances I might not have been very profoundly grieved at the idea of losing his company; for in general I had fully sufficient reliance on myself to be perfectly at

my ease when I was quite alone. In the present case, however, as I strongly suspected that his design was not to deprive me of his society for long, but rather to restore it, augmented by the company of the officers from Rennes, I determined to entreat his stay with me ; and, as the strongest inducement that I could hold out to him, I took one of the pistols from my saddle-bow, and levelling it at his head, with the distance of about ten yards between us, I ordered him to turn his horse up the St. Malo road without more ado, or I would shoot him on the spot. Though I saw him turn very pale at this intimation, he affected to laugh, declaring that I must be in jest ; and I thought I perceived that he hesitated, whether to obey or to take his chance, and set spurs to his horse. The clicking of the lock of the pistol, judiciously timed, brought his doubts to a conclusion, and gave the preponderance to obedience. He said that he would obey, of course, if I positively directed him, for that the Duke had given him strict orders to follow my commands implicitly.

“Extremely well you have obeyed!” cried I; “but, without farther words, turn your horse up the road, for I am not to be trifled with any longer.”

“Well, well,” he replied, as he slowly drew his bridle in the direction that I pointed out, “it was only for your own good I spoke; and if you will take a bad and dangerous road, the consequence be upon your own head.”

As I thought that there was no use in driving him to desperation, I did not choose to let him know how intimately acquainted I was with the good designs he entertained in my favour; but pausing, pistol in hand, till I saw him fully launched upon the St. Malo road, I then wheeled my horse and followed, determined to keep all my discoveries to my own breast till such time as I could confide them to Monsieur De Villardin. As soon as I became sure that retreat was impossible, and that my companion must go forward on the road which I pointed out, I dropped my hostile attitude, replaced my pistol in the holster, and, joining him again, endeavoured to enter into conversation as if

nothing had happened to disturb our equanimity; but, I believe, in this I expected more from human nature than human nature could afford; the man was disappointed of a good thousand crowns, besides what he had called the pickings of my saddle-bags; and he likewise laboured under the mortification of having been outwitted and bullied by a mere boy; so that he well might be, what he really was, savage and sullen for many miles of the road. In addition to his other causes of wrath, I soon perceived that he was not without some apprehension that I had discovered his designs; and I doubted not, that if he could have made himself perfectly sure that such was the case, he would have soon brought the matter between us to a struggle for life. I was accustomed to such things, however, and I did not make myself at all uneasy on that account; but keeping constantly on my guard,—for there is never any telling what may happen next in such affairs,—I rode on, taking care that an interval of two or three yards should always exist between his hand and my bridle-rein; and

where the road was not sufficiently wide enough for that purpose, I made him go on before, and followed a few steps behind.

That road, however, deserves a fuller description, for it was as pleasant a road as ever I travelled in my life, excepting a few spots, of each a mile or a mile and a half in length, where a sandy soil rendered it heavy and fatiguing. A little beyond the place where we first entered upon it, a low stone wall marked the ancient boundary of a forest. Even at that time, however, the large trees had retreated more than a mile from the extreme limit of the wood; and the space that intervened between the wall and the real forest, was covered entirely with the sort of brushwood, or, as the French call it, *taillis*, which rises on the cutting down of larger timber. This gave us a fair view of the kind of ground over which the forest extended, which was of so broken and irregular a nature, — full of pits, dells, banks, and ravines, that it would have required infinite labour to render it productive of aught but that which then covered it. After the road began to wind in

amongst the higher trees, some of which appeared of great antiquity, we lost all sight of the surrounding country, except where, every now and then, the ground had been cleared by some accidental circumstance, or where the track that we were pursuing ascended to some commanding height. On these occasions, indeed, we sometimes obtained a very splendid view beyond the forest, over tracts of rich and cultivated land; and, as I was beginning about that time to find out that the face of nature was a very beautiful thing, and to enjoy the aspect of a fine country with a sort of romantic delight, I often paused to gaze for a moment on any prospect that thus caught my eye. While thus engaged, my companion generally rode on in sulky silence; but I never suffered him to go far without my society, lest any of the roads which intersected the forest, and which I could not of course be expected to know, should afford him an opportunity of deviating from the prescribed track before I thought fit to permit him to do

so.

I had just made one of these pauses, and my

companion had just ridden on, in the manner which I have described, when, on looking after him to see how far he had proceeded, I thought I perceived a brighter gleam of sunshine than usually enlivened the gloom of the wood, streaming across the road a little beyond the point at which he had arrived. Suspecting that it might be shining down a cross road, I set spurs to my horse, and was nearly up with him before he reached the little brake. I had just time, however, to gain a more accurate knowledge of the spot, and to perceive that it was a gap, but not a road, down which the light was streaming, when there came a quick bright flash from the wood, and, at the same moment, the groom fell headlong to the ground, while his horse dashed on, masterless, along the track before us, and my charger, after rearing violently, rolled over, dyeing the sand with its blood.

These sort of surprises are generally followed by a speedy explanation; and the appearance of four stout, well-dressed, good-looking gentlemen, with firelocks in their hands, pistols in

their girdles, and swords by their sides, at once gave me a clear insight into the whole affair. As my poor horse, panting in the agonies of death, lay heavy upon my foot and ankle, which he had crushed beneath him in his fall, I was in no condition to offer any resistance, even had it been wise to do so against such superior numbers. The groom, indeed, was still less capable of opposing any measures that our friends with the firelocks might judge expedient, as the ball, which was probably intended for his horse, had deviated a little from its course and gone right through his head. I lay quite still also, for in all the many conflicts of one kind or another that I had witnessed, I had always remarked, that men, in working themselves up to such an action as that which our assailants had just committed, engender in their own bosoms a great deal more fury than is at all necessary to the accomplishment of their exact purpose. This superabundant energy breaks upon the first object opposed to it; but it soon evaporates, and those who would stab you the moment after they have fired the gun,

or rushed to the charge, will be a great deal humanised within five minutes after the struggle is over.

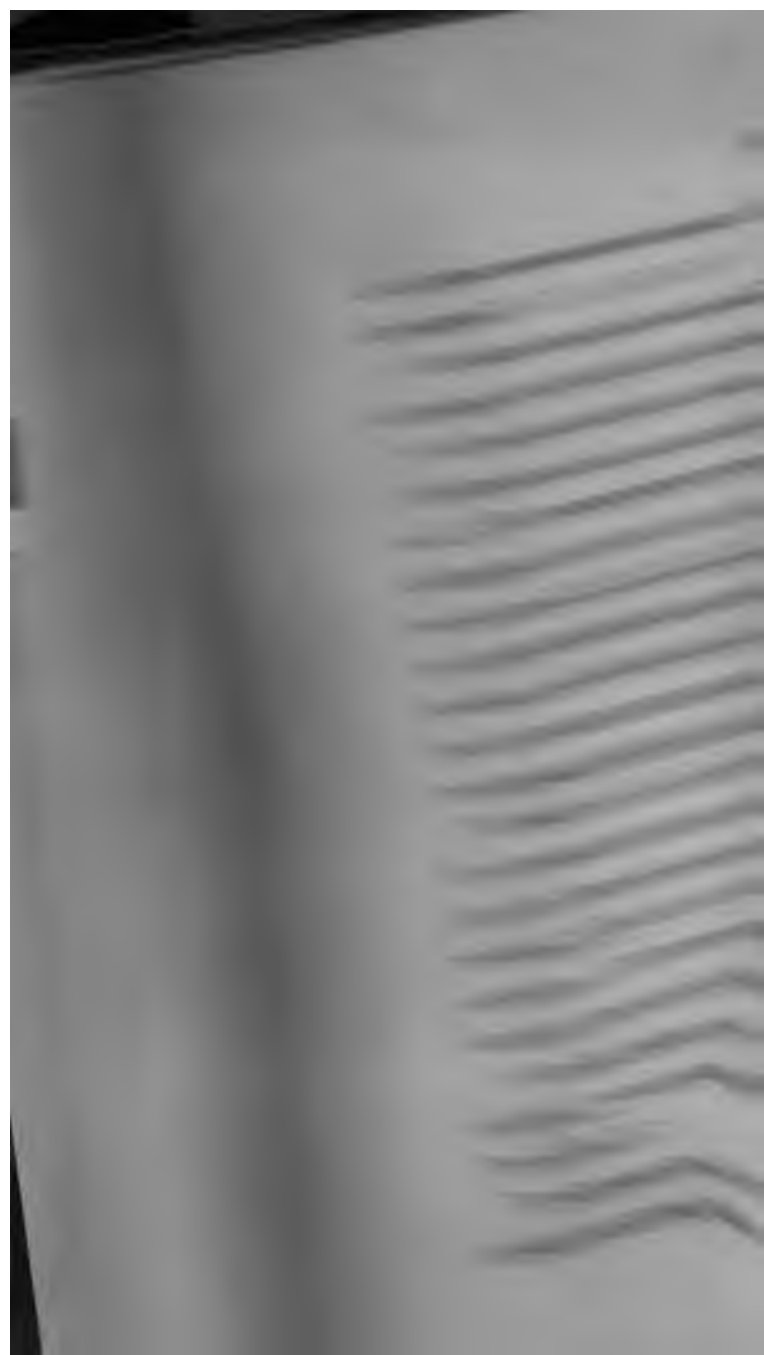
The robbers rushed immediately upon the groom like hungry wolves ; and, turning him over, for he had fallen upon his face, took a hurried glance at his countenance. " Diable," cried one of our assailants, as they did so, " we have made a mistake, Messieurs. This is not the courier after all. Peste ! you have killed him too, Serjeant. Why the devil did you fire so high ?"

" You have done the same for the other, Hubert," replied the one he addressed.

" I hope not," said the first ; " I had his horse fair enough ; but let us see."

On the assurance of these charitable expressions, I ventured a low groan, which, indeed, had long wanted utterance ; for the pain I suffered by the horse lying on my leg was most intense, especially as he more than once made a dying effort to start up, and then fell back again upon me.

" It is a boy," said the leader of the robbers,



as they came near. " Art thou dead or alive, *mon garçon?* "

" Not quite dead," I replied, " but I cannot get up, for the horse is upon my leg."

" Ah! so I see, poor boy," said the other. " Help us here, Serjeant, and let us get him out." This was easily accomplished; and, finding that I could not stand with very great ease to myself, I sat down on the bank, rubbing my leg with both my hands, to recall it to some sensation, making up my mind, at the same time, to undergo the interrogatory which I saw was preparing for me.

The leader of the robbers gazed upon me for a moment or two with a sort of cynical grin, and then, turning to his companions, he remarked, " He takes it coolly enough, in all conscience. Come, tell us, who are you, *mon beau page?* and whither you were going?"

" I am the page of Monsieur de Villardin," replied I, " and was going to his castle of the Pres Vallée."

The Captain struck the butt of his firelock against the ground with a movement of im-

patient vexation. "This is unlucky enough," he said, "for I certainly did not want to quarrel with Monsieur de Villardin,—especially as I am such a near neighbour of his," he added with a smile; "and pray who is that?" he asked, the next moment, pointing to the body of the groom.

"That is one of his grooms," replied I, "sent to guide me on the way."

"Worse and worse," cried the captain; "why the devil, Serjeant, did you fire so high?"

"It is no great matter," answered I; "he has only shot a great rogue, who would have lived to be hanged, and whom I had nearly shot myself on the high road not an hour ago."

"Pardi, thou art a droll youth," rejoined the captain, "and, if thy tongue do not belie thee, no true Frenchman."

"No, but what is better," replied I, "a true Englishman."

"The better I deny," answered the captain; "but I blame not your bold love for your country. However, I must see more of you, my gay lad, before I determine on letting you go: so you will come along with me. You, Serjeant, bring

those saddle-bags; there may be something worth having within; and you, François and Martin, try if you cannot bury the man down in the sand-pit yonder; and heave over the horse too if you can get it done; but bring up the saddle and bridle, for they are too good to be lost. Keep a good watch for the courier the while. He may pass by yet, though it is late. Now, come along, my man," he continued, turning towards me again; "what, cannot you walk? then, good faith, you must limp!"

Of course I did as I was directed, and, limping on as well as I was able, followed my conductor through the wood for nearly a mile; at the end of which I found myself in the deepest part of the forest, and by the side of a rapid stream. A little farther up the river, I perceived the ruins of an antique mill crowning a high bank, with the remains of the wheel, long broken to pieces, now serving alone to render the waterfall by which it was formerly turned more picturesque to the eye.

Thither I was led by the robber, and on entering the old building found that it was more

dilapidated in appearance than in reality ; or, at least, that its present tenants had contrived to render it very habitable. Three or four more personages, of the same cast as those I had already encountered, were found within the mill ; but still it was apparent that the man who had conducted me hitherto was captain of the gang, and he was immediately assailed by a thousand questions concerning some courier, for whom it was evident these gentlemen had long been waiting.

My appearance in company with their leader, at first, made them conclude that the encounter they had been expecting had taken place ; but they were soon undeceived, and my unhappy saddle-bags being brought in and laid down in the midst, I had the mortification of seeing more than one rapacious hand thrust into their bowels, while piece by piece all my wardrobe was drawn forth, and at length my little store of golden crowns appeared, causing a reflected sparkling to shine in the robbers' eyes.

“ A better day's work than I thought,” cried

Hubert, their leader ; “ now, young gentleman, we are men of honour and humanity, and therefore we shall let you keep your wardrobe —”

“ Except that lace collar,” cried one of his comrades, “ which I claim for myself.” — “ And that embroidered band,” said another, “ for which I have a fancy.” — “ The pouch for me!” exclaimed a third ; and it certainly seemed that my apparel, as well as my purse, was in a fair way to change hands. The captain, however, interfered to moderate the rapacity of his gang, and it was at length determined that not only my dress, but twenty crowns, which happened to be in my purse, should be left me. My saddle, bridle, and horse equipments, together with my silver-mounted pistols, became the property of the captain ; and the only remaining question between us was, in regard to the packet of letters and orders with which Monsieur de Villardin had charged me for his farmers and agents in Brittany. These were wrapped up in a skin of leather to keep them from injury ; but as soon as Master Hubert had satisfied himself that nothing but written papers were to be found

within, he returned the bundle to me, saying, that he would not interfere with the discharge of my duty.

I was in hopes that this was but a prelude to my being set at liberty; but the captain did not suffer me to remain long in suspense, informing me candidly enough that I must stay with them a day or two; for that they had yet a coup-de-main to perform, which they trusted would enrich them sufficiently to render it both wise and expedient to change their lodging. "As soon as that is accomplished," he added, "we will despatch you upon your journey, but in the mean time we do not choose to trust to that quick tongue of yours."

As there was no help for it, I of course offered no resistance, very well understanding that the coup-de-main to which the captain alluded, was the contemplated attack upon the unfortunate courier from Paris to St. Malo, whose appearance, I had heard at the last inn, was daily expected. He did not show himself, however, so soon as had been anticipated, and I remained several days at the old mill, very well

contented with the treatment I received from my new companions, who certainly lived upon the fat of the land, and seemed not to suffer any remembrance of the means by which it was acquired, at all to trouble its digestion. I acknowledge, too, that if I could have escaped the honour and reputation of the thing, I would very willingly have shared in some of their adventures; and I began to think that the profession of a robber, if properly conducted, might afford a very attractive sort of life.

Hubert, the captain of my new friends, was a man of a very intelligent and enquiring mind; and from the information I could give him in regard to the state of affairs in Paris, took great pleasure in my conversation. Nor did his questions alone refer to his own country, but one night he so besieged me with enquiries concerning England, its manners, customs, produce, trade, and situation, that I ended by asking him in return, if he thought of taking a trip to exercise his abilities in that country.

“Not, at least, in the manner which you suppose,” replied he; and then, looking over

his shoulder to see that all his companions were absent, he added, "you do not think, my boy, that my state of life has never been different from that which you now witness, or that this trade is to continue always."

"No," replied I, quietly, "for it usually ends very speedily — at the gallows."

"It will not end so with me," answered the captain, somewhat fiercely; but the next moment his face again took on a smile, and he added, "this adventure, with what we have amassed already, will make my fortune sufficient to embark in a different speculation. The fellows who are with me may carry on their old trade if they like, but, for my part, I have had enough of it."

"I think you are very right," I replied; "it is always as well to leave off while the play is good."

"True," answered he; "but I have one warning to give you, my good youth. If, in the course of your life hereafter, you should ever meet me in a different station from that in which you now see me — such a thing may

happen you know — and if ever you do, take good care that your memory be not too retentive, for if, by either word or look, you pretend to recognise me, I shall certainly remember my old profession likewise, and take care to keep you silent by sending a ball through your head."

Though he looked very fierce as he spoke, I only laughed at his menace, asking him what benefit would accrue to me by betraying him.

" I do not know — I do not know," he replied, " but you are warned ; and so beware."

As we were engaged in such familiar conversation, I would fain have asked him what sort of connection could exist between him and Monsieur de Villardin ; but, reflecting that he might think the question somewhat impertinent, and thence argue no great discretion on my part for the future, I thought it most prudent to be silent, lest he should take means to put it out of my power either to ask more questions at the time, or make any observations at an after period.

Four days more passed without the appearance of the courier; and the robbers beginning to be apprehensive of his having taken another road, sent out to obtain intelligence, as their stock of wine and provisions gave signs of waxing low. Their messengers soon returned, but what tidings they brought I know not. Most probably their report went to show that the courier had arrived at the next town, and would be accompanied through the forest by an escort; for almost immediately after their return, the whole band, in all nine men, set off, armed up to the teeth, taking care, in the first place, to lock me into a room which had no chimney, and was ventilated merely by a narrow window through which I certainly could not thrust my head.

They were absent about an hour; and as the wind set from the side of the high road, in less than twenty minutes after their departure I heard two smart volleys of musketry, followed by a few dropping shots.

I looked out eagerly as far as my confined casement would allow me, and at length beheld

Hubert with only four of his companions on their legs, bearing along in their arms a sixth person, who seemed to be very dangerously wounded. He died, however, before he reached the mill; and the others, laying him down on the grass, came onward with a small leathern valise, which, by the manner in which they carried it, I judged to be very weighty. Their arrival was followed by long and eager conversations, and a great deal of hurry and noise, but to what all this bustle referred I do not know, as they did not think fit to let me out of durance for nearly three hours. During that time, I saw from the window nine of the horses which they possessed brought out, of which six were instantly saddled, and loaded with a portion of their movables.

As soon as this was complete, to my surprise I beheld the captain come out, and, after shooting upon the spot the three horses that remained unsaddled, mount, together with his four men, apparently in order to depart. My first thought was that they were about to leave me shut up where I was, and I looked round for the means

of forcing open the door when they were gone ; but the moment after, as I turned towards the casement, in order to observe their further proceedings, Hubert called to me to draw back from the window ; and, as I obeyed, he threw in, through the aperture, the key of the room in which I was confined. As I stooped to pick it up, I heard the sound of their horses' feet galloping away ; and before I had opened the door, and arrived at the bank of the stream, the last horseman of the five was out of sight, though, with greater consideration than I had any reason to expect, they had left a horse saddled at the door for my use.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN my worthy acquaintance Hubert and his companions had departed in the manner I have described in the last chapter, I had time to look round me, and consider both my own situation and theirs who had just left me.

From every thing I had seen I could not doubt that the encounter with the courier and his escort had taken place, and that the robbers had proved successful. It was evident, however, that the struggle had been severe; and from the slaughter of three of their horses, as well as from their leaving a fourth for myself, I was led to conclude that four of the gang had perished in the affray. At all events, no doubt could exist as to their having left their late dwelling for ever; and I certainly was not a little obliged to them for the care which they had taken to provide me with the means of pursuing my journey.

Nevertheless, I judged that it might be expedient to examine their habitation and its vicinity thoroughly before I quitted it; and, on doing so, I found that in the hurry of their departure they had left behind them my own saddle and accoutrements, which I instantly placed upon the horse instead of those with which they had furnished him, not knowing how far the fact of sitting in a thief's saddle might not compromise me with those who might chance to be in pursuit of the thief. Having added my own peculiar saddle-bags to the load of my charger, I took such a general survey of the ground and the road which led to it as might be useful afterwards, and, bidding farewell to the old mill, made the best of my way back to the high road. As I never forgot a path that I had once travelled, I had no difficulty in retracing my steps to the exact point at which I had fallen into the hands of the robbers, and gladly found myself once more on the road towards St. Malo, free from any apprehension of fresh interruption.

The affray, however, with the courier and his

escort, must have taken place farther up the road, for it could not have failed to have left bloody traces wherever it occurred; and I met with none such in my onward journey, which I now pursued in the same direction that I had been following when I was interrupted. To tell the truth, I was not at all sorry to have no direct knowledge of the affair, for in these cases concealment is almost as bad as the crime itself, and it must be remembered that I was not in a situation to put my head willingly into the jaws of justice. I was, therefore, well contented that the robbery of the courier, and the murder of his escort, had passed totally without my personal cognisance, although I had no doubt whatever of the facts. To put myself as far, too, from the scene as possible, I galloped on pretty quickly till I came to a carrefour, where the road I was pursuing was crossed by that from St. Aubin to Rennes. It was at the distance of at least ten miles from the scene of my late adventures; and as I came up to it I perceived, seated on the little mound of earth at the foot of the guide-post, a man in the

dress of a pedlar, with his box of wares laid down by his side. At first he was turned in such a manner as to prevent me from seeing his face; but the sound of my horse's feet causing him to look round, he displayed a countenance garnished with a long, black beard, an ornament which at that time was beginning to fall into great disrepute throughout all civilised Europe—so much so, indeed, that no such thing was to be seen in all France, except perhaps on the faces of Jews and Capuchins, and a few which had descended from the reign of Henri Quatre, and were, I suppose, valued by their owners on the score of their antiquity.

The one before me at present was voluminous and massy; but, nevertheless, it did not serve to conceal from me the identity of the wearer with an acquaintance whose face had boasted no such appendage a fortnight before. I affected not to recognise him, however, and, dismounting from my horse—which instantly betrayed its ancient habits by browsing the roadside—I sat down on the same mound with the other traveller, and began conversing with

him as a peddling Jew. He spoke learnedly and lamentably upon the evils and inconveniences of his own profession, and ended by moralising so sagely upon the necessity of bearing our own portion of ills with constancy and calmness, that I could not help exclaiming, "Ah! my dear philosopher, you are now quite complete: when I knew you on the Quai des Orfèvres you wanted nothing of Socrates but the beard."

Jacques Marlot shook his head. "Can your eyes see through stone walls, little serpent," he cried; "but remark what your good crowns have done for me; procured me this box of trumpery, and a beard that is worth half the money."

I am heartily glad to see you so well equipped," replied I; "although your imprudence, joined to my own, had very nearly procured me a journey to the Bastille, and has actually caused me to be stripped of a thousand crowns." I then related to the *ci-devant* printer all that had occurred to me since we last met, and I was glad to find that he sincerely felt for all the in-

conveniences I had suffered, and pressed me to take back again the sum of five crowns, which was all that he had remaining of the thirty I had given him. He declared at the same time that he himself could do very well without, for that the contents of his box, assisted by a fluent tongue and the gullibility of the peasantry, had proved quite sufficient, since he began his new trade, to maintain him as well as he could desire, though to say the truth his taste for the good things of life was not the most moderate.

I refused to accept his offer, of course, telling him that money was quite unnecessary to me, as I counted upon reaching the castle of Monsieur de Villardin in less than an hour.

"You are quite mistaken, my son," he replied, "whether you mean his castle of the Prés Vallée, or that of Dumont; the first being at the distance of at least twenty, and the latter nearly forty miles from the place where we now stand."

This intelligence surprised me a good deal, as I found that I had entirely miscalculated my

situation, and had mistaken my road. Jacques Marlot, however, who, as well as his uncle, good Jerome Laborde, was a native of the country, and acquainted with every rood of ground round about, undertook to guide me on my way, and, walking my horse by his side as he trudged on, we arrived within a few miles of Rennes that night. The next morning, after sleeping in one of the neighbouring villages, we separated, he intending to proceed to St. Malo, to carry on his traffic with any of the seamen arriving from foreign ports, and I turning my steps in the direction of the Prés Vallée, to which he pointed out the road.

No farther accident or adventure occurred to delay my arrival, and, about ten o'clock in the morning I reached the place of my destination. Here I was received with all due reverence by the domestics who tenanted the house, and delivered all the letters which I bore to the farmers and receivers of Monsieur de Villardin.

Nothing could be more beautiful, though nothing could be more solemn, than the aspect

of the castle, and the scene that surrounded it. It was a fortified house, of no great military strength, situated on a slight eminence, rising above the vast rich meadows that stretch for many miles along the borders of the Vilaine. These meadows were broken — for I cannot call it separated — by large belts of magnificent forest trees, which seemed to owe their planting to the hand of nature rather than to that of man, but which, nevertheless, had been so skilfully thinned, that the boughs of one never interfered with the boughs of another; and each grew up in liberty, protecting, as it were, under its branches, its own particular domain, without infringing upon the bounds of its neighbour. Each of these belts varied in shape and distribution; but each left from fifty to sixty acres of pasture ground clear and open within its circuit, with the river generally forming the boundary on one side, and the trees sweeping round on every other, so that each meadow seemed to be a spot of rich ground which had been cleared and cultivated ages ago, in the midst of a vast forest, the trees of which were still

standing around. In fact, a person placed in the centre of any of these open spaces, saw nothing but wood beyond the meadow that surrounded him, till, walking on for a minute or two, under the shade of gigantic elms and oaks, he entered another wide pasture field like that he had just left.

The effect of the whole would have been gloomy, had it not been enlivened by the frequent turns of the river, and the sight of cattle and sheep feeding in the various savannahs, under the charge of their several herds, who most frequently were found cheering their occupation with a song. There was something calm, and simple, and patriarchal in the whole scene, which struck me greatly as I passed through it; and I could have fancied myself removed by thousands of years and thousands of miles from the countries and the times through which I had lately been moving.

The castle itself, built of cold grey stone, and covered in several parts with ivy, was in perfect harmony with every thing around it; and the good taste of Monsieur de Villardin, who en-

tered fully into the peculiar character of the scene, had left all the furniture and decorations of the house—which were rich and good, though in antique style and form—exactly as they had come into his possession.

As I propose to write down in this book the changes of my disposition and character as I advanced through life, as well as the various turns of fortune that attended me in my progress through the world, I must pause for a moment to speak of that which was passing within my own heart, while the events which I have described were working out my general fate.

A new spirit was about this time beginning to spring up in my bosom, and a taste for things that I never before enjoyed was every day developing itself more and more. Whether it was that Lord Masterton had first called my attention to the beauties of nature, or whether it was that before my acquaintance with him I never had time to think of them, I cannot tell; but certainly I began to feel a delight in the aspect of such scenes as the Prés Vallée, which

formerly I had never experienced ; and during the first two or three days, I fancied that I could remain there alone for ever.

I had not yet learned, it is true, to examine very closely what I felt, but I remember at the time thinking it strange, that whereas not two years before I could have passed through the fairest scenes in nature without giving them any particular attention, unless they were lighted up by pike and gun, I now stopped to gaze, without well knowing why, whenever anything that was fair or sweet met my eye. I might not, indeed, look at Nature's face with the feelings of a painter or of a poet ; but I certainly did begin to experience great pleasure in the contemplation of a beautiful prospect, and would turn away when I had done so, pleased, but thoughtful, — I might almost say, sad.

I felt this more than I had ever felt it before in the solitude of my new dwelling, and many a hour I passed away in various sylvan sports, which, while they gave me active employment, still led me into the fairest scenes in the country round.

Nevertheless, I found myself bound in duty to Monsieur de Villardin to make him acquainted with all the incidents of my journey; and though at that time I loved not sitting at a desk, even as long as was required to write a short letter, yet, forcing myself to the task with a great effort, I detailed every thing that had occurred to me, and despatched the epistle to St. Aubin, — for I would not trust it at Rennes — to go by the next ordinary courier to Paris. Nothing happened to disturb my tranquillity for the ten days that followed, and I remained fishing in the streams, or shooting the wolves and the boars, with very little intermission. On one occasion, indeed, having a letter to deliver from the Duke to his intendant at his other estate of Dumont, I rode over thither, and found a very different scene from that presented by the Prés Vallée — rocks and mountains, and streams and waterfalls, with a modern house, modern alleys, modern bridges, and modern furniture. In the mood which then possessed me, however, the Prés Vallée was more to my taste, and I returned to its calm shades as soon as possible,

leaving the letter to be delivered to the intendant, who was absent at the time of my arrival.

At the end of ten days a courier reached the Prés Vallée from Paris, bringing a large packet addressed to myself, on opening which I found a short letter from Monsieur de Villardin, directing me to wait for a fortnight longer in Brittany for the purpose of bringing up the rents of several of his farms, and referring to another more voluminous paper contained in the same packet, which, as I soon perceived, expressed the will and pleasure of the King that no proceedings should take place against John Marston Hall, for the rescue of a prisoner from the hands of the criminal lieutenant, and authorised him to plead the royal grace and pardon in all matters referring thereto.

This, as may well be supposed, afforded a great relief to my mind, for it was by no means pleasant to go about the world with the fear of the Bastile hanging about the neck of one's imagination. Although I had now no apprehensions from the pursuit of justice, I soon began to feel the solitude of the Prés Vallée less

delightful than it had seemed at first; and though, had there been any one to share my sports, or to occupy my time, I should still have enjoyed it much, yet the hours gradually became somewhat tiresome, shut up in an old castle, with nothing but solemn woods around one, and a library of old books for my sole companions. I now, however, found the Latin with which Lord Masterton had furnished me turn to some account; and after having read Ovid two or three times through, I dipped into Lucan, and poured over several other books, in order to while away the evenings.

At length, with infinite joy, I heard that the rents were all paid into the hands of the intendant, with the exception of a small sum, which was expected the next day; and I directed the courier, who had remained for the purpose of returning with me to Paris, to prepare for our journey on the third day. Scarcely had I given the order, however, when a letter reached me, brought by the King's ordinary to Rennes. It was in the hand-writing of Monsieur de Villardin, and contained but a few

words, which were evidently written under feelings of agitation or haste. In this billet, for letter I can scarcely call it, he directed me to forbear my journey, as he himself and his whole household would be at the Près Vallée in six days from the date of his letter; and he then went on to bid me communicate this fact to the various domestics in the château, in order that it might be prepared, as usual, for his reception.

This change of destination was not unpleasant to me, for all I now wanted was society and occupation; and, prevented as I had been, by my youth and my English birth, from entering into the debaucheries or factions of Paris, its routine had become wearisome to me even before I quitted it. All was now bustle in the château. As the autumn was coming on, fires were lighted in every apartment, and busy hands were engaged in removing the dust which, during the last two years, had accumulated in the untenanted rooms. My solitary residence of a month in the midst of such scenes as those around me had, I believe, done more to call

forth whatever portion of imagination entered into the composition of John Marston Hall than all the events of his former life. Lord Masterton, as I have before said, had done a good deal, it is true; but even when I quitted him, my great thirst was for action, not for thought. Now a new ingredient seemed mingling with my nature: I began to view the things around me in a different light; and though I would fain have had some one to converse with, yet I could dream even alone. Thus, during the next two or three days, when the evening had closed in, and I was left in the old library by myself, after reading for an hour or two, I would rise, and, without a candle, wander through all the dim vast halls and gloomy chambers of the *Près Vallée*, watching the flickering light of the fires, kindled in each chamber to scare away the damp, as the flame flashed faintly from time to time upon the rich arras and dark hangings, and dreaming all the time of heaven knows what compound of scenes and adventures which those chambers might have witnessed in times past.

My conduct in these respects, indeed, was somewhat strangely misconstrued by an old female domestic who always remained in the house; but as the misconstruction was all to my advantage, I had no reason to complain. By a little civility and kindness, I had established with her the character of a complete phoenix of pages; and I afterwards found that old Marguerite assured Madame de Villardin, on her arrival, that I had every night made a complete tour of the château to see that the fires were burning, and the rooms properly aired. At length, after waiting two days in hourly expectation of the coming of Monsieur de Villardin, an avant-courier arrived, and in about two hours more the cavalcade appeared in the avenue. In Paris, where one never saw the whole household of the Duke collected, one was not aware of the numbers it contained; but now, when two carriages, each containing eight people, and drawn by six horses, were followed up to the gates by twenty-four horsemen, one begun to have a much more respectful idea of Monsieur de Villardin's establishment

than one had formerly entertained. The Duke himself was on horseback; and, springing to the ground the first, he gave his hand to the Duchess, who appeared to me pale and languid. Both spoke kindly to me: but I could clearly perceive that something was wrong in the domestic comfort of the family; and I soon found that the defects of Monsieur de Villardin's temper and character had not been greatly improved since I had left Paris. Old Jerome Laborde was my principal oracle in these matters, and from him I learned, that for some weeks the Duchess had been very gay in the capital; had been out continually, except when she received company at home, and had been universally admired and praised. All this had been less agreeable to Monsieur de Villardin than it might have been to a man of a more happy disposition; and after becoming irritable and morose in a considerable degree, he had suddenly announced his determination of retiring to Britany.

Madame de Villardin, unconscious of offence herself, and, as most women do, mistaking her

husband's character, endeavoured to argue him out of his resolution. A discussion ensued, the particulars of which did not transpire, even to the all enquiring ears of soubrettes and valets de chambre ; but the whole household perceived that it must have been bitter and severe, for when it was over, Madame de Villardin was found fainting, and bathed in tears. The arrangements for departure were hurried from that moment; and before three days were over, the whole party were on their way to the Près Vallée.

As the old man told me this story spontaneously, I thought I might, at least, venture to ask whether he believed the Duke to have any real cause for the jealousy that he evidently felt.

"None on earth," replied the major-domo. "My lady is gay and lively, and loves well enough to be admired : but she loves my Lord dearly, we are all convinced ; and, depend upon it, no woman ever went astray yet without the servants finding it out."

CHAPTER XIII.

For a time, the change produced on the domestic affairs of Monsieur de Villardin, by his retirement from Paris, was a great improvement. The Duke seemed to feel himself more at ease in the country than the description of good Jerome Laborde permitted me to believe he had been in the town; and Madame de Villardin, like a wise woman, making up her mind to what she could not avoid, seemed determined to dedicate herself wholly to rural occupations and to the wife's first task of making his home comfortable and tranquil to her husband. Matters thus soon assumed a new aspect. Monsieur de Villardin, who was naturally of a warm and affectionate disposition, gave way fully to all the better feelings of his heart; and I have never seen a more happy household than that which, for the month that followed, was presented by the château of the Près Vallée, although Madame de Villardin

herself had become far more grave and matronly than she had appeared in Paris. The Duke, with the natural eagerness and activity of his disposition, was, of course, obliged to find himself constant employment; but to a man so fond of field sports as he was, the country around us presented an unfailing source of amusement. Now it was a fishing party, now it was an expedition against the stags, the boars, or the wolves; now it was a walk to bring home a chevreuil, which furnished us with the day's entertainment; and, on most of these occasions, I was glad to find that Madame de Villardin, at her own request, accompanied her husband.

For my part, the whole was joy and satisfaction to me; for it was evident, that all those whose affections I coveted were daily growing more fond of me: the Duke was never tired of praising my method of conducting their sports; Madame de Villardin seemed to take a delight in seeing me play with her little girl; the servants, who were sure to meet all good offices and no evil ones from my hands, found a great difference between myself and such

pages as they were accustomed to encounter, with whom the ordinary domestics of a house are generally in a state of open warfare. The two younger pages themselves were my pets and my protégés; and the only one who hated me, with a tolerable degree of malevolence, was my first enemy, Master Gaspard de Belleville, whose fear was the only restraint upon his animosity. Certain it is, that his dislike was not particularly diminished during our stay at the Près Vallée. The increasing regard and confidence of our mutual lord towards myself, the frequent rebukes and mortifications that his awkwardness and inactivity in all our field sports called upon himself, as well as the total disregard with which I treated him, all served to increase and cultivate his original distaste towards me. It is true he never dared to show his hatred in such a manner as to give me an excuse for resenting it; but it peeped out in a thousand little words and actions, amongst which, one of the pettiest, but one which best showed his feelings, was a habit which he had of never calling me by my name when speaking of

mé to others, but always designating me — l'Anglais — l'Etranger, — the Englishman — the Foreigner. For all this I was very easily consoled, and indeed scarcely noticed it at all. Monsieur de Villardin, however, himself took notice of the latter circumstance I have mentioned, and one day sharply reproved him for not speaking of me by my name. "Call him, sir," he said, "by his proper appellation, — Monsieur Hall; and remember that he is better born, as well as better educated, than yourself."

Of another, and far more serious trait of his ill will towards myself, I received, about this time, proofs quite sufficient to satisfy myself, though perhaps they were not quite irrefragable.

Shortly after the arrival of the family at the Près Vallée, the Duke took me out with him alone; and causing me to walk by his side, made me give him a far more full and detailed account of all my adventures on the road than I had been able to do by letter. When I had done, he asked me if I had been imprudent enough, before quitting Paris, to acknowledge to any one but himself the share I had had in the liberation of Jacques Marlot.

"To no one, I assure you, my Lord," I replied; "even to his own uncle, Jerome Laborde, I never mentioned the facts; merely telling him — to quiet the old man's mind — that I had heard his nephew had been liberated, without adding one word which could induce him to believe that I had any share in the transaction."

"It is very extraordinary, indeed," said the Duke in reply; "but it is an undoubted fact, that between the time of your aiding to rescue the prisoner and my visit to the Hôtel de Bouillon that night, the police had obtained the most perfect account of your person, appearance, dress, and situation. Can you remember," he added, "whether there was any one present when you related the circumstances to me?"

"No one, my Lord," I replied, "as you may remember, but Gaspard de Belleville."

Monsieur de Villardin shook his head. "Indeed!" he said; "Indeed! Yet I cannot believe the boy would be either so base or so foolish as to betray such a conversation. However," he added, changing the subject abruptly, "of course,

as you have suffered robbery while engaged in my service, I shall not allow you to lose by any thing of the kind. The sum which was taken from you shall be repaid to you as soon as we return home ; and, in the mean time, do not let any suspicion of Gaspard appear in your behaviour towards him."

" There exists so very little communication between us, my Lord," I replied, " on any subject, that there is no fear of my betraying any such feeling ; and certainly, more than ever, I shall take care to conceal it, since you desire me to do so."

The same evening, the Duke gave me an order upon his intendant for the full sum which I had lost ; and, as a still greater proof of his regard, ordered an apartment in the immediate vicinity of his own, consisting of two very comfortable chambers, to be prepared for my sole use.

This state of things had continued about a month, when a rumour became prevalent in our little world that the Duchess was again pregnant ; and, about the same time, after a deep

and fearful fit of gloom, of which no one understood the cause, Monsieur de Villardin shut himself up almost entirely in his library and his bedchamber, and was hardly seen by any body for several days. Madame de Villardin, too, was observed several times in tears, and every thing appeared once more to be going wrong in the family. At the end of a few days, however, a change was wrought in the Duke himself, apparently by the exhortations of his confessor, who was frequently with him for several hours at a time. Of this excellent man I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter; and here it is only necessary to say, that the influence he possessed over the mind of Monsieur de Villardin was at all times extraordinary. His usual residence was at Rennes, and consequently he had not seen the Duke for more than two years: but his authority did not seem to have been at all shaken, nor the bold tone of his reproof at all softened by absence; for I remember once, on passing the library door, which was ajar, having unwillingly overheard him myself tax his penitent with absolute madness. However that might be,

the Duke very soon resumed his usual habits; and it appeared to me that he endeavoured, by increased kindness, to efface from the mind of the Duchess whatever effect any harshness he had shown her might have produced. Most gladly did she seem to catch at every renewed proof of his affection; and the happiness of the family was again apparently restored for the time, when one morning, as we were about to set out to hunt in the neighbourhood, the young Count de Mesnil, who had rescued the Duke out of the hands of the butchers in Paris, and who had since been a frequent visiter at his house, rode up to the gates, and was received with a joyous welcome by both the Duke and his lady. He, like Monsieur de Villardin, had come into Brittany to spend some time on his estates; and as his dwelling was within seven miles of the Près Vallée, his visits soon became very nearly as frequent as they had been in Paris.

At first the natural bent of Madame de Villardin's disposition led her into some of those little acts of gaiety and display from which a habitual love of admiration rendered it almost

impossible for her to refrain ; but very soon, and somewhat suddenly, her manner towards the young Count assumed an air of great coldness ; and I easily divined the cause both of this change and of the great affection which Monsieur de Mesnil appeared to feel for the lord and family of the Près Vallée.

Strange to say, Monsieur de Villardin, awake to the slightest word in other instances, and suspicious where there was no cause, was in the present case totally blind, long after Madame de Villardin herself had become aware of the designs of their visiter. He had known the Count de Mesnil as a mere boy, and he still looked upon him as such. This might be one cause of his blindness ; but, in truth, I believe, there is also a sort of fatality in such cases, or rather a madness, which, to a suspicious mind, makes truth look like falsehood, and falsehood appear to be truth. I felt very much for Madame de Villardin, whose situation appeared to be painful in the extreme ; and whose conduct towards the Count de Mesnil, as far, at least, as I could see, was now faultless ;

but, of course, I dared not say a word to open the eyes of my Lord upon such a subject, without having some decided fact to warrant my interference.

In this state of affairs, nearly two months more passed over our heads, without any circumstance occurring to change my own situation or that of the other parties ; Monsieur de Villardin continuing extremely partial to the society of his young neighbour, and the Duchess, on the contrary, treating him with a degree of cold haughtiness which approached towards rudeness. At length, one morning shortly after the Count de Mesnil, who had been upon a visit at the Près Vallée, had left the house in order, as it seemed, to return home, Monsieur de Villardin set out on horseback, intending to proceed to Rennes, accompanied by myself, Gaspard de Belleville, and one or two grooms. When we were about a mile and a half from the château, however, he suddenly remembered that a packet, referring to the business which called him to the city, had been left on the table of his library ; and, as it was of some importance,

he directed me to ride back and bring it to him at Rennes. I accordingly lost no time in returning to the Près Vallée; but was somewhat surprised, when about half a mile from the house, to remark a horse, which I very well recognised as that of the Count de Mesnil, tied to one of the old trees which I have before described. I had taken a short cut across the meadows, which deviation from the high road had led me through a part of the grounds that, lying at a distance from any of the ordinary paths, was generally very lonely: but, in truth, when I beheld this sight, I wished that I had pursued any other way; for I apprehended, and not without cause, that I might soon be placed in one of the most painful situations that it is possible to conceive. I had, however, but one task to perform—to do the errand on which I was sent; but, in order to see as little as possible, I rode to the back of the château, and, entering from the offices, went up by one of the back staircases into the library. That room, however, opened again into the small saloon, and the door by which I

entered fronted the other, which was unclosed, and exactly opposite to which, on the wall of the saloon, was hung a large Venetian mirror in a silver frame. The moment I entered, I heard voices, and my eye involuntarily rested on the mirror, in which I beheld the reflection of two figures; that of the Duchess, with her back to the glass, so that I could not see the expression of her countenance, and that of Monsieur de Mesnil, kneeling at her feet and holding her hand with some degree of force in his own, while he pressed his lips upon it.

Although, as I have said, I could not see the face of the Duchess, her words, and the tone in which they were pronounced, were quite sufficient to show me that she was repelling indignantly the grossest insult that woman can receive from man.

“If you do not instantly quit me, sir,” she exclaimed in a loud and vehement voice, “I will call those who can and will protect me against your daring insolence. Rise, sir, rise: I do not know which is the most to be despised, your affectation of love for a woman you insult,

or your hypocrisy in pretending friendship for the man you endeavour to wrong."

The Count was not without all those ordinary arguments on the subject by which men furnish women, who are already inclined to degrade themselves, with excuses for so doing. I did not allow him time, however, to make much use of his oratory; but, by oversetting one of the tables in the library, gave him intimation that some one was near. Immediate and not very dignified flight was his resource, and taking his way through another door, he left the Duchess without any great ceremony in bidding her adieu. As I saw her approaching the library, I also made my escape by the back staircase as rapidly as if I had been upon some furtive expedition. The truth is, that my mind, for the first time in my life, I believe, was not made up how to act; and I did not wish to encounter Madame de Villardin until I had formed my determination. I had also obtained the packet for which I was sent, so that I had no cause to stay longer; and, mounting again in the back court, I rode forward towards Rennes.

Although I knew that Monsieur de Villardin waited for the papers, my pace was slow, I confess; for I was embarrassed with meditations, which were not easily brought to an end. Had I been sure that the Duchess would have told her own story to her husband, I might have held my peace, and suffered the matter to take its course; but I clearly saw that the causeless jealousy of Monsieur de Villardin himself had so greatly alarmed his wife, that it was very doubtful whether she would open his eyes to the perfidy of his friend, not knowing what strange and violent effect the communication might produce. At the same time I remembered the promise I had made, never to see him wronged, without making him aware of the fact; but though this promise was decided, yet I felt afraid to perform it, and was long in considering how I might do so in such a manner as to fulfil my duty, and yet to guard against the slightest suspicion falling upon his innocent wife. It may be thought, indeed, that for this purpose, I had nothing to do but to tell all that I had seen, precisely as I had seen it; but

Monsieur de Villardin was not famous for hearing any one to an end, and I therefore knew that the effect of the first part of my tale would, probably, be to prevent his attending to one word of its conclusion. Eventually, however, I both made up my mind to tell him what I had witnessed, and fixed upon the means of making him hear me out; and as soon as this was settled, I put my horse into a gallop, and never stopped till I was in Rennes.

The business which had taken him to the provincial capital detained him for several hours, but was ultimately settled to his satisfaction, and he returned homeward in a happier mood than any I had lately witnessed. He was more calm and placid than he had been for months, and met his wife with that confiding and affectionate air, which I hoped might induce her to open her whole heart to her husband at once. Had she done so, what misery she would have saved him! but she was too much afraid of him to act in the only manner that could have rebuked suspicion for ever. As I was almost constantly, on some excuse or

another, in the saloon or library, I had sufficient opportunity of watching my Lord's countenance, and I scanned it eagerly during the evening, to see whether the tale had been told. He was so cheerful and so gay, that his face, like a summer sky, would, in a moment, have betrayed the slightest cloud that came over him; but the day closed without any appearing, and it was clear that the Duchess, most weakly, had determined to conceal the insult offered to her by the Count de Mesnil from her husband.

The task then lay with me; and when Madame de Villardin had retired for the night, I entreated the Duke to grant me a few minutes' audience. He first heard my request with a smile, and asked whether to-morrow would not do as well; but the next moment his demon woke suddenly up, a cloud came over his brow, and I could see that suspicion and distrust were once more alive. Starting up, he took one of the tapers, and beckoning me into the library, which was more retired and secure than the saloon, he shut the door, and casting himself

into an arm-chair, exclaimed, almost fiercely, "Now! boy! Now! What is it you have to say?"

I saw that he was dreadfully agitated, even by his own imaginations, for as yet I had not said one word to cause the slightest emotion: but still, as I have said, he was moved in an extraordinary degree; and I knew, that unless I took the means on which I had before resolved to gain an uninterrupted hearing, my story would be cut short in the midst. Advancing, therefore, as near as I well could, I knelt down before him, and said, "My Lord, I have something to tell you; but you are so quick, that I am afraid of your not hearing it all. If you will give me your word of honour that you will hear every word I have to say without interrupting me, I will go on; but if you will not, I will hold my tongue, and, on my life, nothing shall ever make me open my lips."

He repaid me with a fierce glance for the conditions that I made; but as he knew that I was one to keep my word, he promised most solemnly to hear me to an end.

"Well then, my Lord," I said, "I shall only farther claim, that as you give credit to one part of my story, so you shall give credit to the other; for every word that I am about to speak is equally true."

I then proceeded to recount all that I had seen in the morning after he had sent me back for the papers; and never did I see a more terrific struggle take place in a human being than that which agitated him during the recital. When I first spoke of Monsieur de Mesnil's horse tied to the tree, he had nearly broke forth; and when I came to relate the scene that first met my eye in the library, he started up from off his chair with every muscle of his face working under excessive emotion. He remembered his promise, however; and sitting down again, covered his eyes with his hand while I proceeded; but as I concluded with the words which his wife had uttered, he caught me by the arm, and gazed eagerly in my face, exclaiming — "Ha! did she say that?"

"On my honour! On my soul, she did," I replied, "as I hope in heaven!"

“ Boy, you have saved me ! ” he exclaimed, sinking back in the chair ; and, to my astonishment, I saw a tear rise up in his eye and roll over his cheek. He brushed it hastily away, and then laying his hand kindly upon my shoulder, said, “ John Marston, you have done your duty well and nobly, and by taking the means you have to make me hear you out, you have conferred an obligation on your lord that must never be forgotten. To a boy of your age I cannot speak as I might to others of the vice and evil that reigns amongst our highest dames in Paris ; but let it suffice, that a woman who so degrades herself becomes, to my mind, a thing of loathing and abhorrence ; and if you can conceive what it is to love with the deepest intensity, you may understand what it would be to behold the beloved object suddenly change from the dearest jewel of your heart to the foulest object that earth can present to your eyes. It is worse, a thousand times, than to see the blighting change from life to death. But you have saved me ; for the very suspicion of such a thing would be madness. — But you have

saved me ; and, after that noble speech, I shall never henceforth entertain a doubt or a fear."

How deeply, how sadly, he deceived himself, may easily be divined ; for where was there yet a suspicious man that ever laid aside his suspicions?

"As to the Count de Mesnil," he added, his lip curling both with scorn and anger, "I look upon him but as a worm : he is one of the many who think it honourable, and gay, and brilliant, to act, as she justly said, the hypocrite and the villain ; and is contemptible. Nevertheless, he must not go unpunished, and must be cared for. On his account I will speak with you to-morrow ; but in the mean time repeat once more what your lady replied."

I did as he bade me, and he marked every syllable attentively.

"You vary not a word," he said ; "and I well know that your honour and your memory never fail. You have saved me from torments not to be told, and perhaps from deeds that might have brought greater torments still ; you have acted wisely and nobly, and henceforth I

treat you as my son. Now, leave me, my good boy, and to-morrow by six of the clock be here in the library, when we will speak of what farther steps are to be taken in this affair."

I left him without reply, and went to bed, satisfied with my own conduct, and gratified by the result. The next morning I was in the library as the clock struck the hour that he had named; but Monsieur de Villardin was down before me, and had probably been so some time, as there were several sheets of parchment before him, and he had just concluded the writing of a paper of some length as I entered. He looked up with a smile when he perceived me, and said, "General St. Maur, or, as I believe I ought to call him, Lord Langleigh, informed me that he and Lord Master-ton had, in recompence for the services you had rendered them, assigned you a sufficient revenue from one of their farms to maintain you at ease in the station which you are destined to fill. Pray how much did they thus grant you?"

"A thousand crowns per annum, my lord,"

replied I; "and, indeed, in your house I do not know what to do with it."

"Oh, time will teach you plenty of uses for it," answered the Duke; "and for the service you have rendered me, I am about to add nearly double what you already possess. There is a small farm, which I bought lately, near my estates at Dumont, which produces about eighteen hundred crowns; and besides the farmhouse, there is upon it the dwelling of the former proprietor, whose family is now extinct. It is called Juvigny. I give it to you for ever, holding only the right of guardianship over you and it, till you are of age by law to use it yourself. There are the papers, together with my directions to a notary in regard to the cession. Bid a groom take them to Rennes, and bring back the deed drawn up this evening, when I will sign it."

Warmly, most warmly, did I express my gratitude, fancying myself now richer than princes; for the sum of three thousand crowns per annum went far beyond any dreams which I yet had of expense. Monsieur de Villardin

smiled at the enthusiasm with which I poured forth the thanks, and at the ideas I seemed to entertain of the boundlessness of my wealth.

"Well, well," he said, "you will learn to appreciate it more justly in time. Go now and give the groom the papers, with particular orders to bring back the deed to-night, for no one can tell what to-morrow may bring forth. Return to me as soon as you have given him your directions."

I immediately obeyed, and choosing one of the grooms who was my more especial favourite in the family, I gave him the papers, with injunctions to use all speed and diligence. I then returned to the library, and found that the Duke had just concluded a billet, on which he wrote the address of the Count de Mesnil, and after drawing a small cord of floss silk across the folds, he sealed the ligature at both ends, and put the note into my hands:—"You will take that," he said with a calm smile, "to our good friend the Count de Mesnil; but do not go till after breakfast, nor let it seem, by your manner, that there is any thing extraordinary

in your mission ; for, to my taste, things of this kind had better always be conducted as quietly as possible. Deliver it into the Count's own hand, when you have reached his dwelling, and bring me back his reply."

Of course I very well understood that I was charged with one of those cartels of mortal defiance which were then so common in every country of Europe. The matter certainly was nothing new to me, for many a very trifling dispute had I seen brought to the arbitrement of the sword when I followed the camp of the Cavaliers ; but it did seem strange to me that the Duke so far departed from the general customs of the day as to send his defiance by a page, instead of by some man equal in rank and station to the person for whom it was intended. I found afterwards, however, that his irritable fear of ridicule, which was the next prominent characteristic of his mind to its susceptibility of the slightest suspicion, was the cause of any thing that appeared irregular in his method of proceeding. However that might be, of course I did not object to the task, though it seemed to

me doubtful how Monsieur de Mesnil would receive such a cartel from a page, and what might be his treatment of the bearer. Personal risk seldom entered into my calculation in these matters, and I ordered my horse to be ready after breakfast, and a groom to be prepared to accompany me, as gaily as if I had been going upon an errand of pleasure. Before setting out, however, I had an opportunity of seeing the behaviour of the Duke towards his wife, and it, I confess, was the first thing that gave me any pain in the business. It was so gentle, so affectionate, so different from what it had been on former occasions, that, as the thought flashed across my mind, that the first day of such tenderness might be the last of his life, I would have given more than all I had in the world to have prevented the proposed encounter from taking place. To do so was, of course, impossible; and accordingly after breakfast I mounted my horse, and rode away for Mesnil Moray, the dwelling of Monsieur de Villardin's adversary.

Though I was a little gloomy when I set out,

old habits soon got the better of new feelings, and I readily brought myself to look upon the affair altogether as one of those matters which every man must undertake, at least, a hundred times in the course of his life. "Monsieur de Villardin," I thought, "will fight fifty more, I hope, before he has done with the sword," and with this consolatory reflection, I cantered on as fast as I could. Somewhat less than an hour brought me to the gates of the château; and, on demanding to see Monsieur de Mesnil, I was instantly admitted to his presence. I thought he turned rather pale when he saw me, but it might be merely imaginary; and certainly, throughout the whole, he behaved like a man of honour and courage. He took the billet, and, cutting the silk, read it attentively, with a slight frown knitting his brows. He then asked me in a calm tone, "Do you know the contents of this note, young man?"

The question puzzled me a little, for though I strongly suspected the general nature of what the billet contained, yet I knew none of the particulars, and could not even be sure of that

which I imagined. I answered, therefore, that " I did not;" and the Count rejoined, throwing the note into the fire, " Well, then, as Monsieur de Villardin has been kind enough to send me an unceremonious request, I will send him an unceremonious reply. Tell him I will accept his invitation, with all its particulars, and that I am his very obedient servant. You may add, I would have written, but that I have a great deal to do between this and night."

Charged with this ambiguous message, I returned to the Prés Vallée, and found Monsieur de Villardin playing with his little girl, while Madame de Villardin was in her own chamber, preparing to go out with him for a walk.

" Have you brought any note?" he asked me immediately, taking advantage of his wife's absence, to enquire the result of my embassy in private. I replied, that I had only received a verbal answer: upon which he formed a pretext to send away the little girl, and made me give him a detailed account of all that had occurred.

“ Well, well,” he said, as I concluded, “ it is all well. Be prepared to go out with me at six o'clock to-night, and get a spade and pick-axe privately from the garden.”

I did not well know what to anticipate from these directions, for it was then in the early part of spring, and at six o'clock, the evening was too far advanced to afford any thing like sufficient light for a fair single combat. Nevertheless, I had, of course, nothing to do but to obey; and, slipping out about half past five, I got the tools from the garden; and after placing them in a spot where they were not likely to be observed, I returned to the library, where I was very soon joined by Monsieur de Villardin. His hat and cloak were already there, and I was just aiding him to put them on, when the groom, who had been despatched to Rennes, returned with a notary and the papers prepared for signature. By the calm way with which Monsieur de Villardin took this interruption, called for lights, heard the papers read, and went through all the necessary formalities for investing me with the

property which he had bestowed upon me, I easily divined that he had no fixed appointment for that hour, and began to suspect the real object of his expedition. When all was concluded, and the notary sent back under a safe escort, he bade me follow him. We thus issued forth in the dusk; and, having furnished ourselves with the spade and pick-axe, proceeded a short distance on the road towards Rennes.

"Now, my young friend," he said, at length, "I must trust to your guidance. I have heard that you never forget spot, person, or thing, that you once have seen. Do you think you can now lead me to the tree, under which Monsieur de Mesnil's horse was tied, when you passed yesterday morning?"

"I think I can," I replied, "and, certainly, if not to the precise tree, I can lead you to the next one to it; for there were but two or three together, and I know the clump well."

When we reached the neighbourhood of the spot, the various objects around at once recalled to my remembrance which was the tree I sought; and, having approached it, Monsieur

de Villardin measured out a space of ground beneath its branches about six feet by three, and, causing me to remove the turf in one piece, we both set vigorously to work, and, with pick-axe and spade, soon hollowed out a sufficient trench to contain the body of a man. "If I fall," he said, when we had concluded our work, "let it be remembered, that I wish this to be my grave. If I survive I will direct you what to do."

Before leaving the spot, he caused me to carry about a dozen shovelfuls of the earth away, and cast them into the river, which flowed at the distance of three or four hundred yards. We then placed the tools in the grave, and returned to the château, Monsieur de Villardin directing me previously, to be up by five the next morning, to saddle his horse with my own hands, and, leaving it prepared in the stable, to go on to the spot where we had been working, and wait there for his coming.

The coolness with which he set about all his proceedings, and my knowledge of his skill as a swordsman, made me feel very confident that

the issue of the combat would be in his favour, although his adversary was his junior by near twenty years. I had seen so much of such affairs, too, that I could generally form a very good guess in regard to the result; and, from all I had observed of Monsieur de Villardin's conduct during the day, I went to bed with very little fear for his safety the next morning. I was up at the time prescribed, saddled the horse as well as I could in utter darkness, and then walked away to the tree, which I reached just as the first faint gray of the morning began to mingle with the blackness of night.

When I had waited there about a quarter of an hour, I heard the sound of a horse's feet, and, a moment after, perceived Monsieur de Villardin, who sprang to the ground, and, giving me his rein to hold, only remarked that it was darker than he had expected; although, by this time, the dawn had made considerable progress. In about five minutes after, which he spent in selecting a piece of firm dry turf unencumbered by trees, and fitted, as far as possible, for the sort of morning's amusement in which he was

going to exercise himself, the sound of another horse's feet was heard, and we were soon joined by the Count de Mesnil. He was quite alone; and, dismounting at a little distance, he bowed coldly to Monsieur de Villardin, saying, "As you requested, sir, I have come alone. You, I see, have brought your page."

"I did so, sir," replied the Duke, "in the first place, that he might hold our horses; in the next, that he might aid the survivor in filling up yon trench," and he pointed to the grave. "He is a boy of honour and of birth," he added, "and you may trust him fully; but, if you desire it, I will order him to withdraw."

"Not on my account," replied Monsieur de Mesnil; "I am just as well pleased that he should be present; though, I must say, that I should have thought the Duke de Villardin might have found some fitter person than a page to carry his cartel to the Count de Mesnil."

"I have chosen the method of proceeding I have followed, Monsieur de Mesnil, not only because I think these things between brave

men had better always be done as quietly as possible, but also, because I judged it unnecessary that many witnesses should hear me tell you, as I now do, that I look upon you as a villain, a hypocrite, and a traitor, devoid of every good feeling but the brute quality of courage!"

"Enough, enough, sir," cried the Count de Mesnil: "the fewer of such words as well as the fewer witnesses the better. Where do you take your ground?"

He then gave me his horse's rein, and Monsieur de Villardin led him to the spot which he had chosen, made him examine it accurately, to see that there was no inequality or artifice, and then, drawing his sword, caused his adversary to measure it with the blade of his own, which proved to be nearly an inch longer. On perceiving this difference, the Count declared that he was perfectly willing to wait, if Monsieur de Villardin thought fit to send to the castle for a more equal weapon; but the Duke replied, that he was quite contented with the sword that he had; and, throwing away his cloak, hat, and coat, took his ground, and put himself in a posture of defence.

The Count de Mesnil prepared for the combat more slowly. He certainly evinced no fear; but there were two or three slight traits that I remarked in his conduct, which induced me to believe that, either from the consciousness of having wronged his friend, or from feeling himself inferior in skill and dexterity, he advanced not to the encounter with the same confidence as that which appeared in the whole demeanour of Monsieur de Villardin. When the Duke had first referred to the grave which we had dug the night before, and pointed it out with his hand, the eye of the young Count strained eagerly upon it for a moment, and it was evident that the anticipations the sight naturally called up were felt bitterly. He was pale, too, and though he spoke firmly and calmly, I perceived that there was a difficulty in unfastening his cloak, and all the other little preparations, which spoke a mind intensely occupied with other thoughts. I observed, also, and it seemed somewhat strange, that he in no degree referred to the cause of his present hostile opposition to a man who had been so lately his friend; and indeed it seemed that the few short lines which

Monsieur de Villardin had written had been quite sufficient to explain all, and to make him feel that amity was changed for ever into unquenchable hate between them.

At length all was prepared, and the swords of the two combatants crossed. After a few parades on either part, which served no purpose but to let each know the skill and peculiar mode of fencing of his adversary, the assault assumed a more serious character; but still it appeared that both wished to maintain the defensive, and I plainly saw that, more than once, the Duke could have wounded or disarmed his opponent, had he thought fit. In a short time, however, the Count de Mesnil, who was of a hasty and passionate disposition, and not so old a soldier as Monsieur de Villardin, became heated in the encounter, and pressed his antagonist hard, still keeping a wary hand and eye, but evidently becoming more and more vehement at each pass. At length, in a furious lunge, by not keeping his right foot quite straight, and probably more accustomed to the *salle d'armes* than the green sward, he slipped,

and came upon his knee, perfectly at the mercy of his adversary. But Monsieur de Villardin, to my surprise, dropped the point of his sword, bidding him rise.

"I do not take advantage of an accident, sir," he said. The Count rose, with downcast eyes and a burning cheek, and replied, after a moment's pause, "I cannot, of course, after this act of generosity, think ——"

"If, sir," said Monsieur de Villardin, cutting him short, "you are contented to go forth into the world again, as one who bears the name of villain, and hypocrite, and scoundrel — and; I shall then add, coward—mount your horse and begone: — if not, resume your place."

The Count's eyes flashed, and the combat was instantly renewed, but this time with a different result. At the end of four or five passes, with a movement so rapid that I could scarcely see how it was effected, though it may be believed I was an eager spectator, Monsieur de Villardin parried a lunge of his adversary in such a manner as to leave the whole of the Count's person open. He then

lunged in return, and the next moment the Count de Mesnil was lying prostrate on the turf. At a sign from the Duke, I threw the bridles of the horses over a low bough, and ran up to the spot. The fallen man by that time had raised himself upon one arm, and with the other hand seemed grasping at the blades of grass; but he spoke not, and his head, drooping forward, concealed his countenance. "Shall I bring water?" I said; but, ere time was given for an answer, the strength which had enabled him to raise himself so far passed away, and with a single groan he fell back upon the ground and expired.

We stood and gazed upon his still, pale countenance for several minutes; but it was very evident, from the first look, that his career was at end; and, after a pause, the Duke bent over him and opened his vest. Scarcely a drop of blood had flowed from the wound which caused his death, although, from the direction it had taken, it seemed to me that it must have pierced his heart.

"It is over!" said Monsieur de Villardin,—

"it is over! yet, put your hand upon his heart, my boy: see if it beats."

As I opened his shirt to do so, there dropped out a locket, which was suspended from his neck by a blue riband, and which contained a single lock of dark hair. As soon as he saw it, the Duke caught it up, and unfastening the riband, gazed upon the hair for a moment or two with an eager look. It was certainly the colour, to a very shade, of that of Madame de Villardin; and I instantly saw that the demon had taken possession of her husband once more. After gazing at the locket for several minutes, he put it by, and then asked me, sternly, if the man were dead.

I replied that he certainly was, as far as I could discover. "Then now to our next task," said the Duke: "bring me yon mantle and coat."

I immediately obeyed, and bringing forward the clothes of the unhappy Count, I aided in wrapping the body therein; and then, taking the feet, while the Duke raised the head, we bore the corpse to the grave that we had dug, and

laid it there, without prayer or benediction. We next placed the hat and sword of the deceased in the earth along with him; and then, as fast as possible, filled up the pit with mould. Notwithstanding the quantity of earth I had removed the night before, there was still more than enough to fill up the grave to the level of the other ground, and I had four or five shovelfuls more to carry down and cast into the river. When that was done, however, and the last spadeful had been disposed of, we laid the turf down again over the spot; and so carefully had it been removed, that, though the ground was a little raised, it required some examination to discover where the aperture had been made.

"A few showers of rain," said the Duke, as he gazed upon the grave, "will remove every trace."

I replied nothing, but I thought that the rain of many years would never remove the traces of that morning's work from his heart or from my memory. In regard to the ground, however, I entertained no apprehension of its ever being discovered. The young Count himself, in tying

his horse to that tree when he came on his furtive and evil visit to the dwelling of his friend, had of course selected one of the most retired spots that he could find; and it was only the accidental circumstance of my cutting across from the particular point of the high road where I had left Monsieur de Villardin on the way to Rennes, that had caused me to discover the charger in that situation. In that spot, too, the turf was short, and the grass any thing but luxuriant; so that the shepherds were not likely to lead their flocks thither, at least, till the year was more advanced, by which time all traces of the grave would be effaced. The only thing now to dispose of was the horse; and after examining the ground carefully, in order to ascertain that nothing of any kind had been dropped or forgotten, the Duke directed me to lead the animal some distance in the way to the Count's own dwelling, and then turn him loose.

I did as he bade me, leaving Monsieur de Villardin to return to the castle alone; and, taking the horse by the bridle, I brought it to the vicinity of the road which led to Mesnil

Moray, at a spot about half a mile from the bridge which crosses the Vilaine. There I gave it the rein; and, though it had followed as quietly as possible up to that moment, no sooner did it find itself free, than it darted away as if it had suddenly become mad. It sprang at once over a fence, and crossed the high road, taking the direction of its lord's dwelling, without any regard to path. I climbed up a neighbouring bank to watch its course for an instant; and, to my surprise, saw it plunge into the river, and, after sinking down from the force with which it darted in, rise up again, swim the stream, spring up the bank, and gallop away across the fields.

There was something awful in the sight; and I could not help thinking, as the noble horse bounded away, that there was a living witness of the bloody scene in which I had just taken part, that, could he have found voice, would have soon called the friends of his fallen lord to avenge his death.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHATEVER the Duke himself might feel, I returned home gloomy from my share in the affair. I sincerely believed, indeed, that I had done nothing but my duty in informing him of the injury that the Count de Mesnil had striven to do him, and of the insult that had been offered to his wife. He, on his part, too, I firmly believe, imagined that he had done nothing but that which he was bound to do as a soldier and a man of honour; but still there was something in the whole affair—the solitary encounter—the grave prepared—the burial in unhallowed ground, which added to the event all those dark and awful associations that deprived us of the power of classing it with those common encounters, with which he and I were both too familiar to remember them with any great pain when they were over.

A little less than an hour had been consumed

in the whole affair, at least on the part of the Duke, for I had been absent for a much longer space of time in leading away the horse of the deceased cavalier. However, as our household was not the most matutinal in the world, few of the servants were up, even when I returned; and I doubt not that no one in the whole family but myself had the slightest suspicion that the Duke had for a moment quitted his own dwelling. Thinking it right to make a report of what I had done after I had left him, I now went at once to the library, where I found him, in his robe de chambre, seated at a table, on which neither books nor papers were opened before him, but there lay the fatal locket which he had taken from the person of the Count de Mesnil, and his eyes were fixed steadfastly upon the lock of dark hair that it contained. He instantly took it up when I entered, and of course I ventured to make no observation, though I saw from his haggard look and frowning brow that he was once more adding the torments of suspicion to the pangs which the

fatal business of that morning had left behind. He listened attentively to all I had to say, and though he gave a slight shudder when I mentioned the wild way in which the horse had dashed off towards Mesnil Moray, he made no farther comment, but waved me to leave him, saying he would speak with me more another time.

No injunction to secrecy had been laid upon me, but the Duke seemed to consider it perfectly unnecessary to enjoin me not to reveal the transactions of which I had been a witness, and in some of which I had borne a part. As may be well conceived, I never dreamt of such a thing as babbling, and the matter lay buried as deep and as securely in my heart as it did in his own. Nobody noticed that I had been out earlier than usual, and consequently I was subjected to no questions; and the only single observation referring to the business which I ever heard in the family, was when the head groom asked the Duke's permission to take his favourite horse to the farrier at Rennes, arguing that the animal was ill, from having found him

that morning as heated as if he had come from a gallop.

The household of the Près Vallée were, indeed, amongst the last to hear the rumours and enquiries which soon began to spread concerning the Count de Mesnil. That some accident had happened to him became evident to his servants and retainers within a short time after his death had taken place ; for although no one had remarked, with any particular attention, the fact of his having gone out at such an early hour unaccompanied, supposing him to be engaged in some love intrigue which did not court witnesses, yet when, in about two hours after, his horse, masterless and foaming, darted into the courtyard of the castle, it could no longer be doubted that the adventure of the morning had terminated ill for the Count. On examining the trappings and accoutrements of the horse, it was discovered that not only the girths but the saddle itself was drenched with water, and of course conjecture was led upon a new and a false train concerning the event that had occurred. Some, indeed, contended, that the

Count had been killed by robbers or assassins ; but the greater part of his followers believed that, in attempting to swim the river, he had been washed out of the saddle and drowned. Information, however, was sent immediately to Rennes ; all his relations had notice of what had taken place, and an immediate search and investigation was instituted to discover his body, and to ascertain the circumstances of his fate. A new light, however, was thrown upon the business when the papers of the unfortunate young nobleman were opened by the proper person. It was then found, by two documents which he had written on the night previous to the morning of his death, that he had anticipated such an event, and had made every disposition of his property accordingly. He referred not, however, in the slightest degree to the sort of danger which he apprehended ; the cartel of Monsieur de Villardin, which had probably been couched in terms of bitter reproach, had been destroyed likewise ; and, consequently, imagination had as wide a range as ever. Still some declared that he had pur-

posely drowned himself, and certainly the state in which his horse had returned justified the searches which were made for his body in the river; but others more wildly contended — as he had taken a road which might, perhaps, have led him to the forest — that he had been murdered by the robbers who had so lately attacked and slain one of the royal couriers, with the three soldiers by whom he had been attended. New perquisitions were made in the forest. The whole country round about was searched without effect. Rumours, astonishment, exaggeration, and a thousand falsehoods and absurdities filled up the next six weeks, and then the whole gradually faded away, till the nine days' wonder was at an end, and the death of the young Count de Mesnil became a story to frighten children.

During the six weeks, however, that the fruitless investigations continued, gloom and darkness reigned over our dwelling. Deep and painful were evidently the feelings of the Duke de Villardin in regard to this event; and a thousand times, I am sure, did he

regret that he had not pursued the usual mode of arranging such encounters, which would, at least, have spared him every accessary circumstance that now tormented him from day to day. As a friend of the dead nobleman, he was frequently consulted upon his affairs, and even in regard to the search for his body; and every one thought that they were speaking upon a subject which must interest him, when they detailed to his ears any of the numerous absurdities that were current in the country concerning the death of the Count. All this was very terrible; but, besides all this, there were feelings in the heart of Monsieur de Villardin which aggravated the regrets consequent upon the deed which he had committed. He had known the young Count de Mesnil as a boy. He had known and loved his parents. He had seen him grow up their hope and joy. He had himself anticipated great things from his early promise, and yet his had been the hand thus early to lay him low in a bloody and an unknown grave.

Though sometimes he spoke to me upon the

subject when we were perfectly alone, it was more from various little points in his conduct than from his own words that I discovered these feelings. So far from ever going near the spot where the death of the Count de Mesnil had taken place, he never, even when he could avoid it, rode in that direction, as if the very wind which blew from the grave wafted fresh reproaches to his heart. Even in riding to Rennes, the road to which city passed within half a mile of the spot, if he could possibly devise any excuse for so doing, he would take the most circuitous path, to avoid even coming in its neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, whenever he spoke with me upon the subject, he justified all that he had done, and declared, that were it to do over again, he would act exactly in the same manner. I saw, too, that unhappily there was another feeling in his bosom, which, while it rendered him more miserable than it is possible to describe, confirmed him in this impression—I mean the suspicions which had been freshly excited in regard to his wife, which, as the

effect produced upon his mind by my report of her conversation with Monsieur de Mesnil died away, seemed to become stronger and stronger every hour. It was long, indeed, before he again spoke to me on the subject ; but twice I saw him with the locket in his hand, and at other times his eye would rest on the dark tresses of Madame de Villardin, while I could see plainly that he was torturing his own heart by comparing them in shade and colour with the ringlet which that locket contained. A doubt also more dreadful still, seemed to have taken possession of his mind ; at least I argued so from the following circumstance.

From the various painful feelings connected with the Près Vallée, he had determined to change his residence for a time to the Château of Dumont ; and he told me that he should despatch me thither before the rest of the family. The day previous to my departure he sent for me to speak with him in the saloon, in regard to various matters which were to be done before his arrival at Dumont. The Duchess and his little girl were both present ; and, after

he had concluded his directions, Madame de Villardin told me that if I would wait a few minutes she would bring me a billet for her old nurse, who inhabited the castle to which I was going. I was standing near a window behind the Duke, and when his wife rose, and proceeded towards her own room to write the note she had promised,—displaying, as she did so, that alteration in her figure which denoted her situation,—I saw the eye of her husband fix upon her with an intensity that seemed scarcely sane. Happily she did not perceive it, but walked slowly out of the room; and, as soon as she was gone, Monsieur de Villardin, who seemed to have forgot that there was any one else present, caught his little girl in his arms, and kissed her repeatedly, murmuring,—“Thou at least art mine own.”

He started when he remembered that I was there, and a quick flush came over his cheek; but the expression of deep grief, which, I feel sure, must have been upon my countenance, appeared instantly to calm him, and, laying his hand affectionately upon my shoulder,

he said, — "Thou art a good youth. When thou hast got this note, go into the park and wait me there; I wish to speak with thee for some time."

As there is never any telling to what acts of madness or weakness, folly or meanness, a suspicious nature will not reduce a man, I was almost afraid that Monsieur de Villardin was desirous of examining the contents of his wife's note; and I felt not a little uneasy under the apprehension of his proposing to me to give it up to him. But in this I did him injustice; and when, after receiving the billet, I had gone out into the park, and he had joined me, he at once turned the conversation to matters entirely in the past. "From every thing," he said, "that I have seen and heard, I am inclined, my boy, to put the fullest faith in all you say; and of this fact you cannot doubt, since upon your word alone I have risked my own life and taken that of another. There are, nevertheless, some circumstances of an extraordinary nature, which make me desirous that you should repeat, once more,

the conversation which you overheard between Madame de Villardin and the unhappy young man who lies out yonder;" and he pointed with his hand in the direction of the spot where the Count de Mesnil was buried. "Tell me, then, exactly the whole truth," he added, "and fear not that any thing you may say will agitate or affect me."

I willingly obeyed, for I well knew that impressions of good being never so lasting as impressions of evil, require reiteration; and, without varying a word, as far as my memory would serve me, I recapitulated exactly all that had passed between the Duchess and the Count de Mesnil, adding, at the same time, that the tone of scorn and contempt in which she spoke to him was more forcible than even her words.

"In riding past the house that day," demanded the Duke, "which side did you take?"

"The opposite side to the small saloon, my lord," I replied, very well understanding to what his question tended; "and as I came over the turf, and from among the trees, — which,

if you remember the way I took, you will see I must have done, — it is perfectly impossible that any one in that side of the house could either have heard or have observed my return."

"But, could they not hear you enter the library?" demanded the Duke.

"Impossible, my lord," I answered, "for the first door was open, and the second, as you know, makes no noise; besides, I saw the whole immediately, and Madame la Duchesse was speaking before I entered. It was only the end of what she said that I heard."

Monsieur de Villardin made no reply for some time, but pondered deeply over my words, gnawing his lip, and knitting his brow. At length he spoke, but it seemed more to himself than to me that he addressed his words. "And yet, that he should possess a lock of her hair!" he said: "it is impossible! — there must be some deceit."

"Oh, my lord, it is not her hair," I cried; "depend upon it, there is some mistake."

"False boy!" he cried, turning angrily upon

me, "it is her hair! There is no mistake! Have I not proved it by every test? Either you have been deceived or are deceiving. But, no! you are deceived, I believe. Leave me — leave me, sir!"

It may easily be conceived that I obeyed willingly, for there is but little use in reasoning with a madman, and such I looked upon Monsieur de Villardin to be, in the matter of jealousy at least. Returning to the castle, I occupied myself as usual; but the Duke did not come back for several hours, wandering about, as had been his custom lately, busied with solitary reveries which but served to foster the gloom and anxiety to which he was a prey.

The next morning, as I was to set out for Dumont before the breakfast hour of the household, I descended about eight o'clock to the apartments of good old Jerome Laborde, whose affection for me had not decreased since I had rendered so many services to his nephew. I calculated, therefore, on finding a substantial meal prepared for me in his room; nor was I mistaken, for there it stood upon the table,

consisting of every thing qualified to fortify the eager and craving stomach of youth against the effects of a long journey.

"Thank you, thank you, good Jerome," I cried, at the sight; "thank you both for my breakfast, and for rising betimes in the morning to give it me, as I know you love not to be the first in the house to see the sun."

"Alack! young gentleman," he answered, with a mournful shake of the head, "although I have been up an hour, yet I am not by several the first that saw the sun this morning. My lord has been up since six. So has Gaspard de Belleville, and closeted with his master for an hour. So too has been that pert slut Suzette, my mistress's maid, and she too has been called to the conference. I fear all this bodes our poor lady no good, though God knows what my lord can find to be jealous of here, where she sees not a living soul but himself."

This intelligence did not serve as a very pleasant accompaniment to my breakfast. I saw at once how affairs were going, and easily

divined that my lord, finding me so little disposed to pamper the jealousy, which, though it tore his very heart, was still his favourite passion, was inclined to take Gaspard into his confidence, very sure of finding all sort of compliance on his part. To him I had been, as it were, a blunt razor in the hands of a man who wished to cut his own throat; but Gaspard de Belleville was very well inclined, I believed, to prove the instrument of the wrong which his lord inflicted upon himself. From this new arrangement there was of course much to fear, as far as my personal favour with the Duke went; but, even under that mortification, it was no small consolation to me to think that Gaspard could do little to injure the poor Duchess. However malevolent might be his natural disposition, as far as I knew he had seen nothing which he could distort to evil purposes, and I also believed him to be too stupid to frame a story for himself, or to invent circumstances with such a regard to probability as would deceive even Monsieur de Villardin's willing

credality. What might proceed from the agency of the maid, Suzette, I could not tell. She was, herself, a bold, intriguing, saucy woman; suspected strongly by every one of not being quite a Diana; but I believed that she really was attached to her mistress, and trusted to that attachment to vindicate the Duchess from all suspicion.

My fears, therefore, if I can call them fears, were chiefly confined to myself; and, although I may safely say — now that it is all past and over — that interested feelings had nothing to do with my apprehensions, yet it was most painful to me to think I might be supplanted in the affection and confidence of a nobleman, for whom, with all his faults and his weakness, I entertained a sincere affection.

“Well, Jerome,” I said, after a moment’s thought, “you are an old and faithful follower of Monsieur de Villardin. You see, as we all see, how miserable he is making himself about empty fancies and phantoms in the air. Depend upon it Gaspard is not likely to do him any good in these respects. Now it is your

duty, surely, to strain every effort to counteract any evil that may be done."

"But how can I?—how can I, my dear young gentleman?" cried the old man: "I dare not speak to my lord on such subjects, unless he speaks to me."

"A few words well applied often do a great deal," replied I. "If the Duke hears his lady cried up by all his oldest and best servants and friends as what she really is—all that is good and virtuous—he will soon learn to think so too; and you may find many an opportunity of saying such words as, 'so good a lady as Madame'—'so virtuous a lady as the Duchess.'"

"Well, well; I will try, Seigneur Jean," replied the old man; "and depend upon one thing,—no one shall injure your interests with my lord while old Jerome Laborde is in the house. No, no; I will take care of them."

"Oh, I know I leave them in good hands," I replied, and ere we could say more the groom appeared to tell me that the horses were wait-

ing. After receiving an affectionate embrace from the good old major-domo, I ran down into the court, and sprang upon my horse, without any farther leave-taking, as I was not supposed to know that Monsieur de Villardin had yet risen.

CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH I loved Monsieur de Villardin sincerely, and left my interest in his heart in a very precarious state ; yet I acknowledge that I was delighted to ride away from the Près Vallée. Eversince the death of Monsieur de Mesnil, a gloom had fallen over the place, of which I could not divest it for a moment. These sensations would probably have worn away in a few days, although I began to think more seriously about human life than I formerly did, had not Monsieur de Villardin seemed to feel so deeply upon the subject himself. His regret and melancholy were a constant excitement to my own ; and though, of course, the feelings that I experienced were far less poignant than his, and no other internal torment was added to the awful memories which oppressed me ; yet the cloud that overcast his days shadowed mine also ; and the sight of all the little traits which re-

vealed how painfully he remembered the death of the Count, constantly recalled to my mind the share that I also had taken therein.

Besides this, my mind was fretted and annoyed at beholding continually the anxieties, suspicions, and cares, to which Monsieur de Villardin made himself a prey; the destruction of an amiable woman's happiness, and the misery of a man I loved. I have said fretted and annoyed, because latterly a degree of impatience, which sometimes almost mastered my respect, had mingled with the grief that the sight of such a state of things had first occasioned in my bosom. From all these causes, my feelings, instead of being painful, were joyful in a high degree, on quitting the scenes, which, a few months before, had appeared to me so beautiful and peaceful that I had fancied I could dwell in them for ever; and each mile as I rode on seemed to take more and more of the load from off my heart.

It was the morning of a bright and beautiful day in spring; and as I suppose that there are few people who do not feel themselves happier

when the aspect of the world is cheerful around them, the pleasure I experienced in getting away from scenes of discomfort and pain was augmented by the warm sunshine and the clear sky. The thirst of novelty too, still fresh upon me, made me feel delighted with the journey; and the hope that this change in our dwelling would ultimately lead to a change in the general chain of events, had no small share in the joy with which I set out. The truth was, that though I had certainly met with a sufficient stock of adventures since I had lived with Monsieur de Vilardin to occupy my time abundantly, yet they had not been (if I except those which occurred during the first few weeks) of a kind that at all suited my disposition. Enterprise of almost any sort I liked and enjoyed; but the excitement which I had lately felt was of a gloomy and of a sombre character, which saddened without satisfying—oppressed, but did not please me. Now, however, I anticipated other scenes and other pleasures; and though in truth I had not the slightest reason to suppose that any alteration would really take place, yet fancy

can always supply abundance of materials for the architecture of hope; and as I journeyed on, I gave imagination full scope to work her will, in building up gay edifices in the distant prospect.

Nothing occurred to amuse or interest me in the course of my journey except the simple change of scenery; but as the country through which we passed was very beautiful, and the season one which shows off the loveliness of nature to the greatest advantage, what between fair objects flitting before my eyes as I rode along, and gay dreams rising up in my own bosom, the road did not seem long, nor the time tedious. It was night when we reached the Château of Dumont, and as the gossip of the one château had been, of course, regularly transmitted to the other, by the servants and messengers that were continually passing to and fro between them, I found that the two or three domestics by whom the house was at this time tenanted were prepared to receive me with every sort of deference and respect, having heard that I was an especial favourite

with their lord, and that he had declared he regarded me as his own son.

The next morning, at breakfast, I was visited by the intendant, and delivered to him the letters with which I was charged, and which he proceeded to read in my presence. After asking me some explanations in regard to the Duke's will, on two or three points which did not appear very clear to him, he added, "Here is one letter, monsieur, referring to yourself alone, and, as I suppose you are well acquainted with the contents, I have only to say, that I shall be very happy to accompany you immediately."

I assured him, in reply, that I was perfectly ignorant of his meaning, as I had not been before aware that his lord had written anything concerning me at all.

"The Duke orders me here," said the intendant in reply, laying before me the letter he had just opened, "to put you in possession of the lands and houses of Juvigny, which, he says, he ceded to you, by a deed of gift, about two months ago. If, therefore, you are inclined to take possession this morning, I shall have much

pleasure in walking down with you, and formally making over to you the lands, as well as pointing out the boundaries of the farm and the dependencies thereunto attached."

It is not to be supposed that so young and new a proprietor as myself would be very unwilling to see and take possession of the first property he ever had in his life ; and, thanking the intendant, whom I began to look upon as a very civil person indeed, I willingly agreed to accompany him to my territory of Juvigny. As the place itself and the road that conducted thither are memorable in my little history, on many accounts, I must be permitted to describe that morning's walk, step by step, as we proceeded.

We set out, then, about half past nine, and took our way across a broad terrace, which extended in front of the château, and which, at either extremity, sloped away into a fine road, broad enough for either horses or carriages. In front, however, it was supported by a perpendicular stone facing of about six feet high, at the bottom of which lay an extensive flower-garden, reached by a wide flight of ten

steps ; and, beyond the garden, again extended a fine park, laid out in walks and alleys, containing about three square miles of ground, on either side of a deep and rapid river, which, passing between high banks, took its way, through the midst of the estate, towards the sea, at which it arrived without mingling its waters with any other stream. Across this river the various paths, with which the park was intersected, were carried over a number of bridges, built in very good taste, some of stone and some of wood, as the character of the scene immediately around seemed to require. Over one of these, which consisted of a light wooden arch, the intendant and myself took our way, after having passed through the flower-garden and a considerable part of the park. This direction, I found, was followed in order to cut across a bend in the river ; for, after issuing forth through a postern door into the country beyond the park, we again crossed the stream by another bridge, and proceeded along its course, pursuing a path which wound in

and out through a scene of mingled rock and wood as wild and varied as ever I beheld.

As we proceeded along this road, which we followed for about half a mile, the intendant informed me that the little farm of which I was now the master, had been bought by Monsieur de Villardin, on the death of the last proprietor, lest it should at any time fall into the hands of people who might render its proximity to his park an annoyance to him. We soon after reached our boundary, and, having called at the Métairie, where I was formally introduced to the farmer and put in possession of my new property, we went round the limits, which were much more extensive than I had expected, and returned by the dwelling-house of the old Lords of Juvigny, which consisted of a small feudal tower, with modern offices on the same scale, perched upon a high bank overhanging the water, and commanding a beautiful prospect down the valley through which the river wandered.

While the intendant was busy opening the door, which, from having had entirely its own

way for several years, seemed very unwilling to give admission to a new lord, I asked the good farmer, who had followed us on our round, what was the extensive grey building which I observed about a quarter of a mile farther down on the other bank of the stream. He replied, in a patois which I could scarcely make out, that it was a convent of Ursuline nuns, to whom a great part of the ground on the opposite side of the river belonged.

I answered, that I was glad to hear that I was to have such good neighbours; and, following the intendant, who had by this time opened the door, I was inducted into my house, which afforded a much greater promise of warmth and comfort in the inside, than had been given by its external appearance.

The worthy intendant showed me over every part of it; and when he had done, he added, "You have now seen the whole of the estate, sir, which being—as I understand the Duke—conferred upon you in full, gives you every seigneurial privilege, comprising droits de moulin, et de colombier, d'eau, et de four."

As I turned away quite satisfied with all these fine rights, of mill and dove-cot, water and oven, I observed a slight smile pass between the intendant and the farmer; and as I did not affect to observe it, the honest countryman explained it by a question which he asked my companion in one of those horse whispers which may be heard distinctly at a mile.

“Is he a boy really,” asked the farmer, grinning, “or a little man?” The intendant made no reply, but enjoined silence by holding up one of his fingers; and, walking gravely after me, showed me the same deferential respect which he had formerly put on, and at which I could plainly see he had been laughing in his sleeve. I was nettled a good deal, I confess; for though I did not, in truth, feel myself at all what the world calls a boy, I had not the slightest wish to assume any station but that which was my due. At the same time, I am well aware, and was so even at the time, that the habit of mingling with mankind, and the fact of having passed all my early years in gathering know-

ledge of the world instead of poring over grammars and dictionaries, had given a sort of decision and promptitude to my manners, which, coupled with my juvenile appearance, might well win for me the character of a conceited little fellow from those who saw no farther. However, as I have said, I was nettled at finding that the respect with which the intendant had been treating me, and which was rather suspicious from its profoundness, was nothing but a mockery; and had any occasion for venting my irritation occurred at the time, I might have done so with a vehemence which most probably would have amused him and rendered myself ridiculous. A little reflection, as we walked on, took the anger, and consequently the absurdity, out of my feelings; and, remembering that it was very likely that the worthy intendant might attempt to treat me as a conceited boy in money matters also, I resolved to show him that I was fully aware of my own situation.

“Of course, Monsieur l’Intendant,” said I, as we again entered the park, “you will con-

tinue to receive the rents of the farm, and pay them into the hands of Monsieur de Villardin; for though he has been kind enough to bestow it upon me, I am well aware that my youth and inexperience of such matters utterly incapacitate me to manage it myself. I know, too, that, as a foreigner, I cannot exercise any of the rights you mentioned just now, without higher permission, which, however, the Duke has already promised to solicit for me; and, doubtless, it will be granted long before I am qualified by age to make use of it."

The intendant opened his eyes half an inch wider at a discourse which, I am sure, he did not expect; and, as I thought over the business, I proceeded:—"One thing, however, I will ask you on my own account; which is, to seek me out a good tenant for the house, and the field in which it stands; as the one is overgrown with weeds, and the other is very likely to get out of repair. But, at the same time, it is absolutely necessary that the tenant should be one who is agreeable to Monsieur de Villardin. If you can find such a person as I describe, who

will be attentive to and careful of the place in which he dwells, the advantage of having the house kept from dilapidation will, of course, induce you to let him have the dwelling for a certain time without rent, and the land at the lowest value of the ground."

Whether the intendant did or did not conceive a better opinion of me from this discourse, I can hardly tell; for he was one of those men, so often met with, who, with an air of profound respect, have at the same time a slight smile hanging ever about the corners of their mouths, which casts a sneering expression over their whole countenance. I gave myself very little farther care upon the subject, indeed; for though the people on whom nature or habit has inflicted such a look are always hated — because, without having a pretext for resenting it, we perceive that they are insulting us in their own hearts — yet he was always civil, and never afforded me the slightest pretence for anger, either by his demeanour or his actions. It was therefore, of course, my wisest policy to think as little as possible of what I could not remedy.

At the end of a week, Monsieur de Villardin and the whole household made their appearance; and the bustle of taking possession of their new abode concealed for the first day any changes that had occurred. When all the arrangements were over, however, I began to see a marked and unpleasant difference. Monsieur de Villardin was something more than grave and gloomy; he was abstracted, and at times fierce; and it was evident that the internal irritation of his feelings made him perceive subject of offence in things the most simple and harmless.

To me, he was certainly as kind as he could be; but still there was a difference there also. He often spoke to me gently, even affectionately, of my circumstances and my future prospects; treated me in most respects as his son; made me dine with himself and Madame de Villardin; but he never referred to the events which had taken place at the Prés Vallée. I saw, too, that, on the excuse of not looking upon me any longer in the light of a page, but rather as one of his own family, the familiar intercourse which I had held with him

was in a great degree denied to myself and permitted to another; and that Gaspard de Belleville was closeted with him for hours every day. Of course, this did not please me; for although I trusted to my own conduct to maintain the good opinion of the Duke, yet, with the common weakness of human nature, I did not like that his confidence should be given to another, though it had often been painful to myself. I knew very well that my behaviour, though it might not have gratified his jealousy by admitting suspicions I believed to be false, would command his esteem more than that of Gaspard, who, probably, was more complacent—but who is there so strong and philosophic in heart, as to value esteem more than affection? I saw clearly, and I saw it with regret, that Monsieur de Villardin's love was likely to be given to him who pampered the weakness under which he laboured, rather than to him who tried to clear away suspicions, which, however detrimental to himself, were too firmly rooted to be eradicated without pain.

As some compensation, however, I found that

my place in the regard of the Duchess was becoming higher each day ; and as Monsieur de Villardin, on his arrival at Dumont, had desired me to attend upon her in her walks and drives, not as a page, but as her companion,—I was but fourteen, be it remembered, — and as her guard in case of danger, I had continually the means of cultivating her good opinion. Her spirits by this time were so depressed, that all the gay levity of manner which I had formerly remarked, was gone ; and grave, sad, and thoughtful, she took her daily walk through the park, accompanied by myself and her little girl ; sometimes endeavouring to amuse herself by talking to me of England, and of the scenes that I had gone through — sometimes moved to a smile at my boyish pranks with the beautiful child that ran on beside us — but still relapsing into melancholy the moment that the evanescent light was gone. Never by any chance did she refer to her husband's behaviour towards her ; though once, when she seemed more than usually depressed, her words and her manner made me think she was going to do so.

“ You have greatly won Monsieur de Villardin’s confidence and esteem,” she said, after some previous conversation during one of our walks; “ and I very well perceive that hereafter that esteem will be much increased. Now, Monsieur Hall,” she proceeded, speaking with a considerable degree of emotion, “ I have a favour to ask you, and a promise to exact from you. Of course, no woman in my situation can count upon life for more than three or four months, with any degree of confidence. Should I die, then, in the course of the event which is to befall me,—which I think more than probable,—as you will grow up to manhood with my children, and possess their father’s confidence, will you promise me to be to them as a brother, to defend them with your whole heart and strength, by hand and voice, against any one that would wrong them; and never to forget to uphold their cause whenever you hear them assailed? Will you promise me this, upon your word of honour as a loyal Englishman and the son of a good soldier?”

“ That I will, madam, and that I do,” re-

plied I: "even had you not asked it, I would have done so. But I now bind myself by every thing I hold dear, in case—amongst the many changes of the world, which have laid my own hearth desolate, and given my father's house to strangers—they should ever require such weak aid as mine, I will give it to them with my whole heart and soul, and show as much zeal in their cause as if I were their brother."

I purposely made my promise as strong in point of language as I could devise, because I clearly saw, by the agitation of the Duchess while she spoke, that her husband's late conduct towards herself had excited in her bosom many a fearful apprehension in regard to the fate of her children. Hope, I have heard, will catch at straws; and certainly—though in the wide range of probability it was possible I might ultimately be able to render the services she required—there appeared but little likelihood of my assistance being of much avail: yet nevertheless my zealous promise seemed to relieve her mind greatly; and, as I made it, I saw the tears, which had been crowding to the gates of

her eyes while she herself had spoken, now burst forth and roll over her cheeks.

“ Thank you, thank you ! ” she replied : “ I know that your promise will not be forgotten, and therefore I shall never mention the subject to you again, but rely in all confidence upon your word : ” and so saying, she led the way back towards the château.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FORTNIGHT, or rather more, passed away in this unpleasant state; and I found that time, which reconciles one to most things, had not that effect at all in making me endure patiently the transfer of the Duke's confidence to Gaspard de Belleville. Had he been, indeed, a person who deserved that confidence, or who would not have abused it, although my vanity might have been as much pained, my reason would not have supported me in murmuring, nor would my affection for my lord himself have given additional pain to my personal mortification. As it was, however, I felt convinced, from what I knew of that youth's disposition, that he would not only do nothing to cure Monsieur de Villardin of his morbid suspicions, but that, both for the sake of maintaining his place in his master's favour, and of annoying me, he would do all that he could to foster any feelings which he might find out that I had opposed. When

these thoughts came across my mind — not being of the most patient temper in the world, nor particularly scrupulous as to the means of gratifying it — I more than once thought of throwing my adversary over the bridge into the river ; and as I had never yet done any thing of the kind in my own private cause, though I had committed many a doubtful act in the cause of others, I endeavoured to reason myself into believing that such a proceeding was absolutely necessary to the peace of Monsieur and Madame de Villardin. This passed through my thoughts more than once, I acknowledge ; and I imagined — if done fairly in single combat, strength against strength, without any surprise or feint on my part, and with full warning received by him — that the act I contemplated would be fully as justifiable as any duel that ever was fought. He, indeed, had the advantage of age, being certainly two years older than myself ; though now, having grown considerably in the air of Britany, I was as tall as he was, and nearly as muscular.

What all this would have ended in, Heaven

only knows ; and I am almost afraid to calculate now what would have been the probable result ; but two circumstances took place soon after my conversation with the Duchess, which I have detailed in the end of the last chapter, which put an end to all further thoughts upon the subject. The first was the arrival of a personage, who, on many points, changed all my ideas and opinions, gave me a new view of my duties, and both enlarged and purified my mind. The second was an accident which suddenly gave me a higher place than ever in the affection of Monsieur de Villardin, and established a link of connection between his heart and mine that neither years nor circumstances could ever break.

Let me speak of the events which followed, however, in the order in which they occurred.—Of old Jerome Laborde I had seen a good deal since his arrival from the Prés Vallée ; and, although he could give me no information as to the result of the conferences held between Monsieur de Villardin, his page, and the sou-brette, he did not fail to point out that the

change which had taken place was an evil one, and that all happiness was banished from our dwelling. The only thing, he said, which would ever restore it, would be the coming of good Père Ferdinand, his lord's confessor, who had more influence over his mind than any one, and who had promised to come over and stay at Dumont for some time. I had caught a passing sight of the confessor more than once at the Prés Vallée; and both from something prepossessing in his demeanour, and from the effect which his exhortations had produced upon Monsieur de Villardin on a former occasion, I argued in the same manner as good Jerome Laborde in regard to his next visit.

Various circumstances detained him, it appears, at Rennes for several days after this conversation; and the next time I saw the good major-domo was one day when, on suddenly entering the saloon, I found him speaking with the Duke, and, as it appeared to me, in an attitude of entreaty. I was about to draw back; but Monsieur de Villardin beckoned me forward, saying, "Come in, *Seigneur Jean*,"—

the name by which he usually called me when in his milder mood,—“ come in ! Here is Jerome pleading to me in a matter which concerns you in a twofold degree. It seems that you have told the intendant to seek you tenants for your house at Juvigny, generously promising to let them rest rent free if they will keep the house in repair. Now, I find that Jerome has a nephew who is newly married, and who wants a dwelling, and he applies to me for my consent to his occupying this tenement of yours. Are you willing, Seigneur Jean ? ”

“ Most willing, my lord,” I replied, glad to give the old man any testimony of my regard : “ I am sure Jerome would not recommend any one who would not do full justice to all intrusted to him.”

“ By my faith ! I am not so sure,” answered the Duke. “ You know more of this youth than I do ; for it seems you saved him once from the gallows—a piece of business not very much to the credit of either. Besides, I may be accused, Jerome, of harbouring convicted felons.”

"But, my lord, I can assure you," answered the old man, "he has obtained grace and pardon of the King, only coupled with the condition that he never sets foot in Paris again, nor ever attempts to exercise the business of a printer."

As may well be conceived, I was not a little surprised to find that my first tenant was likely to be poor Jacques Marlot; still more to hear that Jacques had taken unto his bosom a wife; and most of all, to find that a libel, which attacked the person and reputation of the Queen Regent herself, had been pardoned upon any consideration whatever. However, I, of course, joined my voice to that of good old Jerome Laborde, who, to tell the truth, promised and vowed a great deal more on the part of his nephew, than I at all imagined his nephew would justify, assuring the Duke that all his follies were completely at an end, and that henceforth, he himself would answer for Jacques living a sober, tranquil, and peaceful life. Industrious and clever he always had been, he continued; and as the good ladies of St. Ursula,

the old man said, were going to give him the management of their little farms, just opposite to Juvigny, the house would come quite apropos. Although with some difficulty, the Duke yielded to our solicitations, but solely on condition that Jacques produced to the eyes of the intendant the act of grace by which he was relieved from all danger of the royal indignation. Jerome willingly accepted of the terms; and I withdrew with him, in order to hear more of my worthy philosopher's fate, and the adventures which had brought about such a consummation as matrimony and the cultivation of the earth.

The major-domo, however, could tell me but little more than I had already heard. He had received, he said, a letter from his nephew that morning, dated from St. Aubin, entreating him to make the request he had just done to the Duke, and giving him satisfactory assurances that his pardon was really granted. How it had been obtained, Jerome added, remained to be explained to himself as well as to me; but respecting the farm of the Ursulines,

and Jacques Marlot's knowledge of my plans in regard to Juvigny, an easy explanation was afforded, by the fact of his having just married a niece of our intendant's;—"A little against the intendant's stomach, I believe," said the major-domo; "but it was an old love affair, it seems, before Jacques went from Rennes—where he was in good business enough—to Paris, where he got bad business enough. But I have promised to open my own little store in his favour; so that that affair is all set right with Monsieur l'Intendant."

I now found that Jacques, with his wife and other movables, was to take possession of his new dwelling, if his uncle obtained it for him, in a few days; and as I could afford to bridle my curiosity for the intervening time, I left the good major-domo, and proceeded on my other affairs. These were of no great importance, and suffered little from being disturbed; but as the old man's own occupations were very numerous, and generally methodically arranged for all the hours of the day, I was somewhat surprised to see him enter my chamber towards

nightfall, and seat himself as if prepared for no brief conversation.

After again thanking me for the fresh kindness I had shown his nephew, he said,—“ But it was not on that subject I came to speak with you just now. You must know that Père Ferdinand arrived about an hour ago, and is even now in conversation with my lord. You will see him at supper; and doubtless my lord will introduce you to him, and will tell him all you have done. But I took the liberty, my son, of telling him all before, and also of letting him know how much you were attached to my lord, and how eager you were to promote the peace and happiness of all the family. Nay, more—and I hope, and am sure, that you will not think I went too far—I promised him that you should meet him this evening, after supper, in my apartment, and make his acquaintance more completely.”

“ Oh! I will willingly meet him,” replied I; “ though I suppose we should have had plenty of opportunities of making acquaintance during

his stay in the château, without any appearance of secrecy."

"It need be no secret, my son," answered the major-domo; "and in regard to your making acquaintance with him afterwards, that would depend entirely upon circumstances; for he does not seem at all assured of staying even over to-morrow, till the conversation he is now holding with the Duke is at an end. I merely wish you to see him, because I think, that, using both your efforts, you may do away much that is amiss in the house, and also because I am sure you will love and esteem him; for there never was a better man."

As old Jerome had anticipated, on entering the *salle à manger*, at the hour of supper, I found the Duke standing with the confessor, to whom he instantly introduced me, saying,—
"Father Ferdinand, this is the young Englishman I mentioned, whom I look upon—if not as my own son, since such a feeling is, perhaps, impossible—at least as the son of a dear brother, and treat accordingly."

The confessor took my hand, and looked at

me with a smile full of benignity, saying,—
“We must be friends, my son; I hear a high character of you from all quarters.”

I expressed, as well as I could, my willingness to meet his kindness; and as the Duchess was not well enough to appear that evening, we sat down to supper alone. I remarked that Monsieur de Villardin was more calm, though not less grave than he had seemed of late; but it was the person and demeanour of the priest that principally engaged my attention.

He was a man considerably past the prime of life; and though his frame was neither bent nor broken by the weight of years, yet his age was to be traced in his thin white hair, and in many a long deep furrow on his brow and cheek. His eye, however, was bright and clear; and his teeth of as white an ivory as ever appeared between the lips of youthful beauty. He was thin and pale, but his complexion was clear, and, probably had never been red; and his form, which was tall, was also upright and graceful, and in no degree stiff. His robes, too, sat well upon him; which

is always a sign of a lofty education or of a fine mind; for no one can feel himself perfectly at his ease, in all his movements, without possessing the one, or having received the other. With Monsieur de Villardin the Confessor spoke as equal to equal; and though, from his demeanour, I might, perhaps, as a first impression, have inferred that he was one of those priests who so frequently govern, with absolute sway, the little kingdom of a private family, yet he was evidently not one of those who would truckle to the prejudices, or give indulgence to the errors, of any one in whose dwelling he was established. There was in his whole conversation a tone of bold independence, mingling with the tenderness of his manner, which took away from it the slightest appearance of subserviency, and made me feel that, in giving him the title of Father, one only addressed him by a name which he believed himself to deserve.

After supper I again retired, and, as I had promised, took my way to the apartments of the good major domo, where the priest soon after made his appearance, and spoke with me

for some time, kindly and frankly, upon a variety of indifferent subjects. He was evidently delighted to hear that my mother had been a Catholic, and that I had been originally brought up in that faith; but he pressed the subject no farther upon me, and I saw that he skilfully avoided saying one word that might make me suspicious of any design on his part, either to force himself into my own confidence, or to wring from me the secrets of others. Gradually, however, he brought the conversation round to the subject of Monsieur de Villardin, and spoke with deep, and, certainly, sincere regret, of the state to which the Duke appeared to have brought himself. He asked me no questions, however; but on my expressing equal pain at the fact, he only replied, by exhorting me to strive, by every means in my power, to remove the poison from my friend's mind. I willingly promised to continue all my efforts, and our conference thus ended.

After what I have just said, it may seem extraordinary, that my first impression of Father Ferdinand was not favourable. On retiring to my own chamber, I sat down to meditate over

the character of the Confessor, and, as usual, formed my judgment very rapidly. I was wrong, however — entirely wrong ; for as yet I had only allowed myself to remark the worst — I may say, the sole bad, trait in Father Ferdinand's nature. On it, with the keenness which had been taught me from my youth, I pounced like a tiger, and resolved to be as wary as possible to guard myself against its effects. This evil spot, which I short-sightedly conceived to overspread the whole surface of his heart, though, indeed, it was but a small blemish therein, was a slight touch of that subtlety for which our priests are rather famous : but I must pause for a moment, to define exactly its real limits, lest those who may read this writing, fall into a like error with myself.

It was certainly a part of Father Ferdinand's doctrine, that, in churchmen, the end justified the means, provided that the means were not absolutely immoral. Thus things that, under any other circumstances, he himself would have considered meannesses, lost that character in his eyes when they were employed to effect

some good purpose; and art, duplicity, and cunning, used either in extracting the truth from others, or in guiding them, even against their will, upon the path he thought it right for them to follow, seemed to him not only admissible, but praiseworthy, in a priest. He stopped there, however, saying that no clergyman had a right to go farther; and that if, upon the pretence of guiding others, he did one act that was really sinful, the sin rested on himself, aggravated rather than palliated by the motive, inasmuch as it was insulting God to suppose that he could be served by sin.

On these principles, he made the character of all those with whom he was brought in contact his most minute study; employed every method of obtaining information concerning them, even to questioning their servants and their friends; and, having done so, proceeded, step by step, to establish his own influence over their minds, which it was only owing to the goodness of his own heart, and the natural rectitude of his judgment, that he employed to their advantage and their peace. At first, however, he proceeded cautiously; suffered the traits of their

hearts to develop themselves before his eyes; shocked none of their prejudices; rudely assailed none of their opinions, till such time as he found himself secure of his power over their minds; but then, certainly, with an eloquence which I have never heard excelled, and a fervour rarely equalled, he would combat their errors, oppose their vices; and, once having begun the strife, would throw himself before their passions, in full career, and show them that they trampled on every thing sacred, if they pursued their onward course.

The consciousness of this ultimate purpose, too, gave a dignity even to acts that I cannot but imagine to be reprehensible; and even, in the endeavour itself to elicit from dependants the secrets and character of their lord, — an occupation which surely is mean, if there be any thing mean on earth, — there was an air of authority in his whole bearing, which made it seem more as if he were examining witnesses with the power and right of a judge, than enquiring into the private history of others for objects of his own.

It is with regret that I have stated this blemish in a man I esteem and love, though no one will see these lines till both our eyes are closed, and his virtues will live remembered long after we both are dust. He himself, however, saw it not as a blemish; and were he now to behold the lines in which I have endeavoured to portray it in its true features, he would, very probably, say, that I had softened down one of the best traits in his character to suit my own prejudices; for he himself has always contended, that the noblest victory he ever acquired over human weakness, was that in which he conquered his natural repugnance to employ means which the world condemns and scorns, for the sake of effecting the best of purposes.

In all other respects, my memory can rest upon every part of our acquaintance with pleasure; and, look into it as narrowly as I will, I find qualities in his character which I can admire and respect. In point of physical gifts, nature had originally been very bountiful to him indeed, and he had cultivated what she gave with extraordinary care. A fine ear for

music, and a rich, melodious voice, gave full effect to a copiousness of words, and a happy selection of epithets, that could only be gained by long study; and clearness of thought—which is probably a natural faculty—was thus rendered doubly efficacious by immense power of expression.

But I must not dwell too long in description, which seldom does justice to its object. The next morning, in strolling through the park,—a custom which my habits of early rising enabled me to indulge before the rest of the family were up,—I was joined by the Confessor, or, as he was generally called, the Directeur; and although, as I have said, I had already formed an erroneous opinion of his character, which led me to believe that any conversation between us was to be a game of chess, where it would behove me to be wary of all my moves; yet there was something so bland and pleasing in his very salutation, that I walked on with him, not ill-pleased with his company.

“I am glad to see you are an early riser, my son,” he said, after wishing me good morn-

ing. "It is a practice which leads to many worldly advantages; and, where the mind is well disposed, may be turned to better purposes. There is a freshness, and a sublimity, and a calm monitory voice, in the early morning, which inspires purity of feeling, counsels good purposes for the ensuing day, and lifts the heart to adoration of the Being who made all the bright world that is waking around us."

Whether he did it with that purpose or not I cannot tell, but certainly he could not have chosen a better method of breaking down all the barriers between us, which my examination of his character on the preceding night had raised up, than by thus showing me that there were finer thoughts and feelings in his heart than those which I had as yet discovered. After a few more words, however, in the same strain, he again brought the conversation to Monsieur de Villardin; and he now spoke of him in terms of tenderness and pity which he had restrained on the preceding night, while in the presence of the old domestic. Nor was it alone

his sorrows he appeared to commiserate: he seemed to pity him more for his errors than even for his griefs. He spoke of him as of a being who, with noble powers and a generous heart, had, by a few weaknesses and faults, created for himself lasting misery below, and endangered his happiness for the long hereafter. There was something so eloquent, I may say, so sublime, in the pouring forth of his lamentation over one who was evidently his friend as well as his penitent, that I was struck and affected; while all my prepossessions, I felt, were rapidly giving way to a truer estimate of my companion's character.

Seeing that I listened eagerly, and, mistaking the cause of the surprise which was visible upon my countenance, he added, "You wonder to find me addressing you thus upon the subject of the Duke; but you must remember that I am his confessor, and know exactly how much you know of his affairs; what share you have had therein, and how you have borne yourself under difficult circumstances."

I replied not; for I began again to be upon

my guard, fancying that all this might be but a prelude to questions which I might not think fit to answer. By my silence and the casting down of my eyes, he seemed at once to enter into my thoughts:—"Be not afraid, my son," he said, laying his hand upon my shoulder, with a smile; "I seek no information that you can give me. Indeed, what need I, knowing much more than you can know. Suffice it, that what I have heard of your conduct—making allowance for faults of education and habit—leads me to give you my esteem: and I trust that, even yet, with your good aid, I may be able to eradicate from the bosom of my noble friend the root of bitterness that poisons all the current of his days: and although a shadow from the past is, I am afraid, cast over his future for ever, yet we must try to soften it by the light of hope, which springs from repentance."

I doubted not that the priest alluded to the death of the Count de Mesnil; but it was neither my business to take it for granted that Monsieur de Villardin had confided that secret to him, nor did I see that the strong terms he

used were very applicable to that event; for I could not get my mind to comprehend that the fact of killing an adversary in fair fight, though it might be a matter of personal regret, was at all a subject for religious repentance. I replied, therefore, generally, that, of course, he was the best judge of what his penitent had to atone for; but that, for my part, as both duty and affection prompted me, I was willing to strain every nerve to relieve the mind of Monsieur de Villardin, and to restore him to a happier state of feeling.

“I doubt you not, my son,” replied he, seeing that there was still some holding back in my conversation with him, “I doubt you not, and trust that the time will soon come when you will not doubt me. In the meanwhile, to speak of another part of our subject, good old Laborde tells me that the page, Gaspard de Belleville, seems lately to have taken your place in the Duke’s confidence. Your place in his esteem and affection he has not taken, as I positively know; and I would fain be sure of the fact that Jerome Laborde tells me before

I speak with Monsieur de Villardin about it. Have you yourself remarked any difference?"

"So much so," I replied, "that many a painful feeling have I experienced on the subject. Indeed, I attribute the great increase of that evil which we all deplore to the fact of Monsieur de Villardin's now confiding entirely in persons who are likely to foster all his suspicions, and strengthen every wild idea that jealousy may suggest."

"And do you think that this Gaspard de Belleville is a person to do so?" demanded the priest.

"Beyond all doubt," I answered. "So sure am I, and so sure have I been, that such is the case, that, only yesterday, I contemplated bringing him to the middle of that bridge and throwing him over into the river, after giving him fair warning of my intention."

"My son!" exclaimed the Confessor, recoiling with a look of involuntary horror; but the moment after he recovered himself, cast his eyes down upon the ground, and muttered a short prayer.

"Of course," I added, seeing the surprise painted on his countenance, "I did not propose to do so without giving him every fair equality. You did not suppose, I trust, father, that I would take him by surprise?"

"God forbid, my son, that you should do such an act at all," replied the Confessor: "the time will come when you will think better."

He said nothing more upon that subject, however, governing his own feelings with wonderful control; but, from that day forward, I seldom failed to meet with Father Ferdinand in some part of my morning's walk; and I saw that the words I had spoken with regard to Gaspard de Belleville had never been forgotten. Gently and cautiously, but firmly and perseveringly, he applied himself to change opinions and prejudices which my early habits had rendered almost a part of my nature. At first he would take an opportunity of descanting generally upon the value of human life, as the most precious gift of God; and, at various times, he put it in a thousand different points of view; each tending to show that it was an inestimable

gift, which no creature had a right to take from another, except in those cases which God himself had pointed out. Now he represented it as the space allotted to a sinner for repentance; now as the means of conferring benefits on others,—rearing and supporting a family,—and doing the will of the Almighty. Now he showed it as the crowning and especial gift of God—a thing alike beyond man's comprehension and his efforts, which he could, indeed, take away, but which he could never restore. Now he would display the horrors that would oppress that man, who, on a supposed injury, had taken the life of another, if ever he were to discover that his passion or his judgment had deceived him, and that no injury had really been done, or that it had been attributed to an innocent person. Now he would carry his view beyond this world, and represent the agony that the murderer's soul must suffer, when, in addition to the weight of the crime itself, he felt loaded with all the unrepented sins which his hand had prevented his victim from atoning upon earth. Then, again, he

would return and awaken every human sympathy ; display the sweet ties broken, the dear hopes destroyed, the noble careers cut short, by such deeds : he would represent loves and affections that we know not of, bright but secret aspirations, joys and good deeds concealed from every eye, ended for ever, as the punishment of some trifling fault or idle folly ; and, in the end, when he found that all my prejudices were shaken, he addressed himself direct to my own heart, with such powerful and eloquent exhortation, that thenceforth I mingled with the world with very different feelings in regard to the relationship between man and man.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN speaking of Father Ferdinand, I have compressed into one view the effect which was produced upon my mind by many long interviews with him. These took place, as I have said, almost every morning; but in the meanwhile several events occurred to which I must now turn. A slight variation in our dull and somewhat painful course of life was afforded, about this time, both to good Jerome Laborde and myself, by the coming of Jacques Marlot and his bride to my house at Juvigny, and by the preparations which preceded his arrival. In these preparations, indeed, I did not share; but almost every day I perceived that good Jerome continued to absent himself from his duties at the château for a sufficient space of time to run down, through the park, to Juvigny; and many a time did I meet him with gleesome satisfaction depicted on his counte-

nance, returning from his expedition to his nephew's new dwelling.

As soon as I had learned that my friend Socrates had brought home his Xantippe, and was fairly in possession of his new abode, I asked the Duke permission to absent myself for an hour or two, and sallied forth to make him a visit of congratulation. I found him gazing forth from his door, with pleasure and content, at the prospect around him, having the farm which he was to cultivate for the good Ursulines just on the opposite side of the river, the convent itself within a quarter of a mile ; and a little stone bridge, at half that distance, to render it easily accessible.

Madame la mariée was within, aided by a bustling big-nosed Bretonne servante, arranging the household gods ; and Jacques Marlot himself had thus an opportunity, without any sacrifice of dignity in the eyes of his bride, to pour forth his joy and gratitude to John Marston Hall.

As he somewhat belaboured me with thanks for all sort of kindnesses, past, present, and

to come, I cut him as short as I could, by demanding impatiently to see the bride.

“Ha! ha! my young lord and master,” he exclaimed, “do not excite my jealousy within the first fortnight of my marriage; for I have but lately found out that you are an old friend and high favourite of my dear better half.”

These tidings surprised me more, perhaps, than they might have done at a later period of my life; for at that time the extent of my female acquaintance was very limited, and perhaps the most decided fragment of my boyhood that then remained to me was a lingering dislike to the generality of female society, and a very juvenile contempt for women in general.

“Indeed!” exclaimed I, in reply to Jacques Marlot’s information, “indeed! you make me but the more curious. Let me offer my adorations with all speed to the first of your household divinities.”

“Well, well; enter, enter, by all means,” he cried: “I am not made of jealous stuff, thank God; and, as our love has already lasted

five long years, I trust it will not break short at matrimony."

I was now conducted in form into the house ; and on the first floor we found the bride and her coadjutrix, when my surprise was still more excited, by beholding in Madame Marlot the pretty brunette whom I had seen at the inn near St. Aubin, on my first arrival in Brittany, and who had warned me of what was passing between her father and the groom who then accompanied me. After the first salutation, I returned her my thanks in set form, although I had nearly lost my life in consequence of her information ; and I then enquired after her worthy and respectable father as tenderly as my conscience would permit me to do.

In reply, she informed me that her parent had most unjustly been suspected of having given information to the same band of robbers who had plundered me, that the courier for St. Malo was about to pass within their hospitable neighbourhood, on a certain day and hour ; and that, in consequence, he had been arrested and thrown into prison, where, within one fort-

night, he died, just as the authorities were about to liberate him, having become convinced of his innocence, and judging that a fortnight's imprisonment was a sufficient punishment for being suspected. The prisoner having thus liberated himself, his daughter was left, according to her own account, sole heiress of her father's wealth, which proved a burden less weighty than she had anticipated. She also found so many persons in this generous world willing to relieve her of it, that she saw very clearly it would soon be no burden at all; and therefore she set herself to consider what she might best do under such circumstances, when suddenly her ancient lover, Jacques Marlot, appeared one night at the inn, and presented her with an expedient that she did not fail to adopt.

In reply to this communication, I paid her my compliments upon her wisdom; and, as I found that the kind-hearted brunette and her bridegroom were both bent upon my staying to partake of their first dinner in their new dwelling, I yielded to my fate, and found that

neither Jacques Marlot's taste for *friandise*, nor the skill which Madame had acquired in the kitchen of an inn, had abandoned them. During our meal, my philosopher gave me a sketch of his wandering life in the guise of a pedlar; and then related the means he had employed to obtain his pardon, which were ingenious enough. It appears that in France the presence of the King is always mercy, and that if he but set eyes upon a condemned criminal his punishment is remitted. Well knowing this fact, and trusting to his disguise, Jacques Marlot made his way towards Paris, and having heard that the King and court were about to make their public entrance into the capital on a certain day, he prepared to take advantage thereof, to obtain his pardon. This plan succeeded to his wish. Bribing some of the guards at the palace with a considerable portion of what he had gained in his petty traffic, he placed himself in a spot where the royal party were sure to pass, in descending from their carriages; and, as the young King and the Queen came on together, he struggled

forward to cast himself at their feet. One of the ushers, indeed, opposed his progress, and knocked the poor printer down to make him clear the way; but this only brought him literally to the King's knees; and the young monarch's first impulse was to stoop in order to raise him, reproving, at the same time, the usher for his violence.

Jacques Marlot rose no farther than his knees, however, and in that position besought pardon for his offences. It being now ascertained who the intruder really was, the guards were ordered by Mazarin to take him into custody; and poor Marlot was removed, trembling, as he acknowledged, for the consequences of his bold attempt. The rule, however, was suffered to prevail even in his case, although the Queen and the Cardinal were both exasperated in a high degree against the unfortunate printer. After remaining in one of the rooms of the palace for more than an hour, his pardon was brought him, but coupled with the condition, that he should quit Paris immediately, never to return, and should never more exercise the trade of printing in

any part of France. "And thus, my dear benefactor," he added, "I turned my steps hither, determined to become a new Cincinnatus, and, abandoning the government of Roman capitals, to dwell upon my farm and put my hand to the plough."

In such conversation we passed an hour or two very cheerfully; at the end of which time I took my leave, and left the pair to conclude their evening alone. It was now about two o'clock, on a fine April day; and, walking slowly along, I meditated over all the strange turns of that strange and unaccountable thing, fate, which, principally by the means of a complete stranger, had conducted the *ci-devant* printer in less than a year from the foot of the gallows to a peaceful retirement in a beautiful country.

On entering the park, I took the shady walk by the bank of the stream, both because the warmth of the day made a shelter from the sun not unpleasant, though the year was yet so young, and because I always had an indescribable pleasure in sauntering by a running water, and gazing upon the current gushing brightly by

me. The banks here were irregular, sometimes high and overhanging, sometimes sloping softly down, and dipping their turf into the stream; and, as I often paused to gaze, and ponder, and revolve a number of sweet sunshiny dreams that were now very common to my mind, I was at least twice the length of time in the walk than I needed to have been.

Luckily did it happen that I was so. When I had got about half way to the château, I perceived that there were others in the walk besides myself; and, straining my eyes a little, I saw that it was Madame de Villardin, with a servant a step behind her, and her little girl running on before. The Duchess approached but slowly, with her fine eyes, as usual now, bent pensively upon the ground, and her hands, which were very beautiful, clasped together, and resting on her waist. The little girl, full of the joy and vivid life of youth, ran backwards and forwards before her mother, now gathering a flower, now peeping over at the stream, and receiving, from time to time, a grave caution from the soubrette, who walked behind, against

approaching too near the water. As soon as she saw me, however, the little Laura had a new object of attention, and running along the walk like light, she came towards her playfellow. The impulse, however, was soon over; and, ere she had half reached me, she slackened her pace on hearing the voices of her father and the Confessor in one of the other paths hard by, and was turning gaily to seek them, when an early butterfly started up from the bosom of a flower and caught her notice. The painted insect fluttered on before her with that sort of faint impotent flight which leads so many a child to follow on for miles still hoping to catch it at every step. Eagerly she pursued, with her whole young soul beaming out of her beautiful eyes. For some way the butterfly flew on down the alley, and Laura de Villardin was close upon it; when, rising a little in the air, it turned its course towards the opposite bank of the river. With a bound forward, Mademoiselle de Villardin strove to catch it ere it escaped for ever, slipped her foot on the bank, and plunged over at once into the stream.

It is impossible to describe the three or four long thrilling shrieks that burst from the lips of Madame de Villardin as her child disappeared. For one instant they overpowered me ; but the next I darted forward to the bank. Luckily the stream was flowing towards me, and, though deep and rapid, was smooth enough. I cannot remember the time when I could not swim, and the only difficulty was to discover the object of our search. The first plunge over had made her sink, and nothing appeared as my eye ran along the river, but the flat glistening surface of the stream.

An instant after, however, the little girl rose again, and, with a faint cry, held out her arms at the distance of about twenty yards from me. I plunged in, with two or three strokes brought myself to the spot, and, finding that she had sunk again, dived down where I caught the gleaming of her clothes ; and, throwing my left arm round her, shot up to the surface, holding her head above my own. By the convulsive grasp with which she seized my neck and hair, I found that she was still living ; and the joy which that conviction gave me was indescribable, when, on

rising above the water, I saw the scene that the bank presented. Madame de Villardin, on her knees, with her hands clasped, and eyes straining upon the spot where I had disappeared, was the first object that met my view; but a little nearer stood the Duke, called to the spot by the shrieks of his wife; while, with the frenzy of agony in his whole aspect, he was evidently only restrained from plunging over also by the firm grasp which the priest had laid upon his arm. Behind him appeared the form of Father Ferdinand, raising up his left hand with impressive energy; and I could not but think he was predicting I would save the child. The whole scene was made up by a number of servants running down towards the spot, together with the woody irregular banks, the bright green shades of the young leaves which clothed some of the trees, and the calm, bright sunshine, streaming cheerfully over all, as if there were no such things as danger, and terror, and care, and distress, in all the many scenes he looks upon.

A shout of joy, that made the banks echo again, burst from the spectators, when we rose

above the surface of the stream, especially when, by the ease with which my old habits of swimming enabled me to bear my little charge, they saw that she was placed beyond farther risk; and when a motion of her hand towards her father evinced that she was uninjured from that which had already occurred. All crowded round the spot to which I directed my course; and Monsieur de Villardin, stooping down, as I approached, caught his child in his arms, and pressed her again and again to his heart. For some time Madame de Villardin wept in silence, holding one little hand of her rescued child, and kissing her fair cheek as she lay sobbing and agitated in her father's bosom. The priest looked on for a moment or two, without speaking; but then calling to their remembrance him to whom their thanks were first due, he offered a short prayer of praise and gratitude in their name to the Almighty Giver of all good.

When this was concluded, Madame de Villardin besought her husband to give their little Laura into the hands of one of the servants, with orders to carry her to the château, lest,

from the dripping state of her clothes, she might encounter a danger different from that which she had just escaped. Her father, however, would not part with her; but, so far following the suggestion, he himself carried her home, hurrying forward as fast as possible, while Madame de Villardin, with the rest, followed more slowly, her situation preventing her from accompanying her husband so rapidly. Her feelings were too intense for speech, and she proceeded in perfect silence; while the priest, who followed by my side, questioned me concerning all the circumstances which had attended the accident.

When we arrived at the castle, we were met by Monsieur de Villardin himself, leading his daughter by the hand, now clad in drier garments, and smiling as gaily as if nothing had happened. Such moments soften and expand the heart; and the Duke's first act was one which inspired bright but delusive hopes of better days in the bosom of more than one person present. He held his daughter up in his arms to embrace her mother, and then

taking the Duchess's hand, he pressed a kiss upon her cheek.

Without pretending to any fine feelings, I may truly say, that I felt as glad as if some great benefit had fallen upon myself. His next act, however, was one which gave me gratification more entirely personal. The little Laura, having embraced her mother, turned to me, and, as I bent over her to ask her how she was, she sprang into my arms and kissed my cheeks repeatedly, with all the warmth and sincerity of childish gratitude. Monsieur de Villardin smiled kindly upon us both; and the Duchess, who was again drowned in tears of joy, held out to me her hand, which I raised respectfully to my lips. We all now entered the château, and, although I was not very apt to fear wet clothes, I made the state of my dress an excuse for retiring to my chamber, feeling that the Duke and Duchess would be better left alone together with their child under the circumstances in which they were then placed. A couple of hours elapsed before I again saw any of the family; but, at the end of that

time, one of the lacqueys entered my room, and informed me, that Monsieur de Villardin desired to speak with me. I instantly followed, not doubting, certainly, that his intention was to thank me for the assistance I had rendered to his child; but not expecting, by any means, the deep and enthusiastic pouring forth of gratitude with which he now overwhelmed me.

He knew not, he said, how he could express his feelings towards me. If he had before looked upon me as a member of his own family, in what light could he now look upon me, when I had saved his child, the idol of his heart, from the death which so imminently threatened her? In conclusion, he again asked what he could do to testify his affection for me, and to express his thanks; and bade me point out myself any way which would prove most gratifying to myself, and he would instantly pursue it, did it involve the sacrifice of half his fortune.

"My Lord," I replied, "I hope for nothing, I wish nothing, I will accept of nothing, for doing an act which is far more than repaid by

seeing the happiness which it has given to yourself and your most excellent lady. Or, if I must ask a boon, it shall be alone, that you will, through life, give me the same place in your regard and affection that you do now, and let me share your love and confidence as long as we both live."

"That boon," replied the Duke, "was granted before you sought it. For never, of course, can I behold you in any other light than as the dearest and best beloved of my friends—nay more, as a benefactor, though the benefits conferred are of a kind that I can never repay. You must think, therefore, of some other request; or, if you think of none now, let it stand over to the future, and I promise, whatever boon you then ask me, to grant you upon my honour."

"I do not think I shall have cause, my Lord," I replied, "to call upon you to fulfil your word; but, as there is nothing that I either want or wish for at present, I can certainly ask nothing now."

"Well, then," he added, "let it remain for

the future; but one thing I must myself do immediately, which I have heretofore forgotten: as I told you before, it will require a royal ordinance to put you, as a foreigner, in full and entire possession of your farm of Juvigny; and, as I stand not over well with the court, I was almost afraid that such a favour might be refused me, if I applied without some special reason which I could assign for making over the property to you. I now can assign the noblest and the most valid of reasons, and I will at once write to the Prince de Condé, one of my best friends, entreating him to make immediate application to the court for such letters patent as may enable you hereafter and for ever to obtain and hold lands and lordships in France, as if you were a native subject of the realm."

I thanked him sincerely for all his kindness, and the letter to the Prince de Condé was immediately written and despatched by a special messenger, who, before three weeks were over, brought me back letters of naturalisation in all due form, and entitling me, John Marston Hall, *Sieur de Juvigny*,—a name which, after-

wards, I occasionally adopted when circumstances required.

If, in the household of Monsieur de Villardin, there had before been any thing wanting to my being considered and treated as one of his own family, such was no longer the case. Every day something new was done to contribute to my comfort and happiness. My time was left perfectly at my own disposal. A servant was selected peculiarly to attend upon me. A suite of handsome apartments were assigned me in one of the wings of the château. Two beautiful horses were presented to me for my own use; and no young cavalier, of the first quality, could have been better equipped in every respect than I now found myself. That which gratified me the most of all, however, was to find that Monsieur de Villardin now selected me continually for his companion; and, though but little conversation of a very private nature took place between us, yet I felt that, as far as his confidence went, Gaspard de Belleville was beneath my feet for ever.

From Father Ferdinand, too, I received a

mark of affection and kindness, which, as I had now learned to appreciate his character properly, gratified me much. The apartments assigned me consisted of an ante-chamber, a little saloon, a bed-room, and a dressing-room; and I was surprised, on returning one morning, to see the carpenters, who were always more or less employed about the house, engaged in putting up a neat bookcase in my ante-room. This was followed by the arrival of two large packets of books from Rennes; and I soon after found the good priest busily employed in placing them in order. When the task was concluded, he begged me to accept them for his sake, and added, "I have had them placed here for you, because there are many leisure moments in every man's life which he is glad to employ in reading, if a book be at hand, when, probably, he would not take the trouble of going down to seek one out in a large library like that below."

When I came to examine the store that the good father had provided for my mind, I was both pleased and amused with his selection; and,

indeed, it offered not a bad type of his own mind. The books were in general of any thing but a heavy or very serious cast, though amongst them were to be found a number of volumes, in the pages of which a man disposed to seek for sound and wholesome ideas was sure to find them on every branch of morals or ethics. The generality, however, consisted of the best and purest poets in the language; of historians a considerable number; of romance writers a very few; but all were chosen evidently with a view to induce a habit of reading, and to lead the mind on to knowledge and virtue, by the pleasant path of entertainment.

The effect was such as the good priest could have wished and desired: as I was not naturally obstinate or perverse, the knowledge of his design led me rather to endeavour to accomplish than to defeat it. Although my taste for reading was, certainly, never so great as it might have been, yet the half hour that I snatched twice or thrice in the course of each day to peruse some of the volumes with which he had supplied me, carried me through a great

number of the classical authors both in French and Latin, and gave me a taste for many things which I had before but little appreciated. Owing both to new pursuits and feelings, my time did not now hang heavy on my hands ; but it must be remarked also, that a renewed gleam of sunshine had fallen upon our dwelling, which made every thing seem cheerful around. The burst of kindly emotions and tender feeling, to which Monsieur de Villardin had given way, had proved more permanent than might have been expected. For several days before, the Confessor had been labouring to free his mind from its delusions ; and, although he had clung to his suspicions with all the tenacity of a jealous disposition, yet the calm, steadfast reasoning of the priest had, it appears — together with my former representations — produced a great effect ; and it wanted but some little circumstance to wake the dormant affections of his heart, when the accident that befel his child occurred. The consequence, at the time, I have already noticed ; and for several weeks the same mood continued. Every thing assumed a new

aspect, and to me, especially, the whole scene was full of enjoyment.

Although the season was no longer one in which we could urge the chase, as we had formerly done at the Prés Vallée, yet fishing and falconry, which was still a favourite sport in that part of Britany, afforded us constant amusement; and, as I have said, I was ever by the side of Monsieur de Villardin, often his only follower, and always his most cherished companion. The only one in the house whom this change seemed really to oppress was my old enemy Gaspard de Belleville; and never did I set out with the Duke on any expedition of pleasure, but I caught a sight of his brow lowering upon us, evidently full of gloomy disappointment at seeing the new hold I had obtained of his master's affections. That he would struggle to regain them himself and endeavour to deprive me of the confidence and regard which he coveted, I did not at all doubt; but, as I feared nothing for myself, and trusted that his power of injuring Madame de Villardin, at least in regard to the Count de Mesnil, was at

an end, his hatred and malevolence were more a matter of mockery to me than any thing else. It is difficult, however, to know when the fangs of a snake are drawn completely ; and I had yet to learn what a base and malicious heart can accomplish, when it scruples at no means to serve its own sordid and ungenerous purpose. I thought it quite sufficient that I did not affect to triumph over him who was evidently my enemy, and that, without insulting him by any thing like protection or condescension, I treated him with civility. I have sometimes, indeed, been sorry since that I did not pursue a different course, and even, by irritating him still more against myself, who could always defend myself, give a different direction to efforts which, without serving his own purpose, were but too fatal to the peace of others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE calm continued for nearly a month; and though an occasional fit of gloom would fall upon Monsieur de Villardin, it disappeared on every occasion ere it had lasted many hours. So much, indeed, did the harmony of the family now seem restored, that Father Ferdinand, although he had agreed to fix his residence permanently in the house of his friend, took advantage of the tranquillity which he had so greatly tended to re-establish, in order to visit Rennes, and arrange his affairs in that city before he finally settled at Dumont.

The situation of Madame de Villardin, and her appearance, became every day more interesting; and although I could at times see a shade come over the countenance of her husband while, as he gazed upon her, some unworthy suspicion crossed his mind, yet, in general, he seemed to regard her with that increased tenderness and interest, which every man must, or ought,

to feel towards a being they love under such circumstances. The medical attendants of the Duchess had strongly enjoined her to take as much exercise on foot as possible; and, followed by a servant carrying a small garden seat, she continued her walks through the park, resting whenever she found herself tired, and proceeding again when she felt able. In many of these walks the Duke himself accompanied her, and still more frequently joined her at one of her halting places. All this bespoke renewed affection and confidence; and I too certainly hoped and believed that the demon which had caused so much unhappiness in our household was quelled for ever. Such was the state of affairs when one day, by the Duke's desire, I set out to visit Avranches and St. Malo, the latter of which places I had a strong desire to see. My little tour lasted four days; but nothing of any interest occurred in its course, except an accidental interview which I had at St. Malo with an acquaintance I certainly did not expect to see so soon again and in such a place. After having visited the port and per-

ambulated such of the fortifications as I was permitted to see, I retired to the house of one of those aubergistes, whose hospitable dwellings are ever ready to receive the money of successful captains just returned from the sea; and there sitting down in the general receptacle of guests, I ordered my dinner, which was set before me by the servants with all the promptitude of men accustomed to deal with a hungry and impatient race.

Scarcely had I begun to eat when a gaily-dressed personage entered, and, placing himself nearly opposite to me, ordered his dinner also, in a tone of authority which was answered with due respect by the garçon, with "Yes, captain — not a moment, captain — directly, captain." This new guest was a strong, square-built man, with a face that any one would have unscrupulously pronounced a frank, open countenance; but, as soon as my eyes rested upon it, — although his whole garb and appearance was perfectly naval, — yet I thought that I had seen him filling the office of captain in the land service rather than the marine. He caught me

gazing at him, and, as he did so, a slight frown curled his brow ; but, as I did not usually respect frowns particularly, I only smiled in return, and proceeded tranquilly to the discussion of my dinner. Before I had proceeded far, however, my acquaintance seemed to have made up his mind as to his conduct ; and, taking a moment when the room was full of different persons, he exclaimed, after fixing his eyes upon me for a moment, “ I think, monsieur, I have had the honour of meeting you before,”

“ I think so also,” I replied, making an inclination of the head : “ your face is familiar to me, though I really cannot tell where I have seen it.”

“ The same is my case,” replied he, “ in regard to you ; but, at all events, you see that I have abandoned the profession of arms, which I followed till within the last six months, and have become a humble captain of a merchant vessel trading to the colonies.”

“ I admire the versatility of your talents,” said I, assuming the same tone, though doubting greatly the truth of the tale he told me :

"you must have acquired a knowledge of naval matters quickly ; for now I remember you were, when last I saw you, a very distinguished, active, and expeditious officer in the service to which you were then attached."

"Oh, monsieur, you are too flattering," he replied, "and, in regard to my versatility, too, do me more honour than I deserve ; for, to tell the truth, I was originally brought up in the navy. You doubt me," he added, in a lower tone, "and perhaps doubt the whole story, but it is true nevertheless. I have, indeed," he continued aloud, "condescended to go into the merchant service, but it is only on condition that my ship be armed, and one of the finest on the water. I should be proud to show her to you, sir. We sail at high water, which will be in an hour ; and if you will come with me to the port, you shall see us get under weigh." I very well comprehended that it might not be quite agreeable to Captain Hubert, with whom I had made a somewhat interesting acquaintance in a certain forest near Rennes, to leave a person who knew his former pursuits

so well as I did, to walk unwatched through the town of St. Malo, at least till such time as he himself had fairly sailed ; the merchant service, it appeared, being his real occupation at the present moment. To put his mind at ease, therefore, as it certainly never entered into my head to betray him, I agreed to walk with him to the port ; and, after he had concluded his dinner, which was interrupted by the applications of half a dozen clerks, and twice the number of seamen, all proving that his tale was true, we turned our steps towards the spot where his vessel was lying.

Near the door of the auberge I saw the servant who had accompanied me thither, and whom I had left to take care of himself. I now, however, made him a sign to follow, and we thus proceeded to the port, which was crowded with people of all kinds, every one busy on their own peculiar affairs, and seeming to think that there was nobody else in the world but themselves. Here the worthy captain pointed out to me his vessel, which, indeed, was of a goodly size, and, ap-

parently, well armed; and it being now time that he should embark, he gave me a friendly invitation to go with him and take a hasty view of the interior. This honour, however, I declined; and, playfully catching me by the collar, he declared, I should go, pushing me at the same time towards his boat with an air of jest, but at the same with sufficient force to hurry me on a step or two, before I was aware. The spectators laughed at the good-humoured captain's badinage; but I, who had seen more of his jests than pleased me, laid my hand upon my dagger, and beckoned the groom towards me, saying, at the same time, "Let go my collar, my good sir, while the matter is a joke! You know I am hasty."

"Oh, if you take it in that light," replied the other, seeing the groom running up, "you are, of course, free to do as you like. But, remember!" he added, in a low, deep voice. "Remember!"

"Pshaw!" I replied, in the same tone, "do not be afraid; I will not betray you."

"I trust you," he said; "I trust you," and,

springing into his boat, he was instantly rowed off to his ship, leaving me to congratulate myself on having escaped a trip to the colonies, where most likely I should have been treated more as the merchandise than the merchant.*

Amused with my adventure, I returned to my auberge, where I asked one or two questions concerning the worthy gentleman from whom I had just parted, and found, by the replies, that, since our former rencontre in the forest, he had already made one successful trip across the Atlantic, and had given every sort of satisfaction to the owners of his vessel. "All is well that ends well," I thought; but, however, it was no business of mine to interfere with a man's return to an honest profession, and therefore, of course, I held my peace concerning one, at least, of his previous occupations.

The next morning, at an early hour, I set off on my return to Dumont, pleased with my

* In explanation of this expression of the worthy autobiographer, it may be necessary to remind the reader that numbers of persons were, about that time, kidnapped and sold as slaves in the various American colonies.

whole expedition, and trusting, foolishly, to find everything in the same state of tranquillity which had reigned there when I left it. As I rode on, and entered the park by the gates near Juvigny, all appeared sunshine and brightness, and there was an aspect of calm serenity about the whole place which rendered it almost impossible to conceive that it was the abode of any thing but happiness. About half way up the avenue I perceived Monsieur de Villardin approaching towards me, with his arms crossed on his breast, and a sort of staggering, uncertain step, which seemed to me extraordinary. I immediately dismounted, and, giving the horse to the groom, advanced on foot to meet the Duke, who evidently saw me, but, suddenly turning away, he took a path into one of the side alleys; and, seeing that he wished to be alone, I remounted my horse and rode on to the château. The first person I saw in the house was Gaspard de Belleville, who passed me in the vestibule, with a sort of grin upon his countenance, which made me fear that matters were not going so well as I could wish; for I had remarked that his smiles were

not, in general, the precursors of any thing very pleasant to myself.

The feeling, indeed, that some disagreeable event had occurred was vague ; but I had always found it the best plan to make instant enquiries into the situation of affairs around me, as soon as ever I had the slightest suspicion that any thing had gone amiss. Without even proceeding to my own apartments, therefore, I directed my steps, at once, to the room of my domestic oracle, the major-domo, and entered unannounced. The old man was busy with papers and accounts ; but the moment he saw me he threw them down upon the table, and, lifting up his hands with an air of affliction, he exclaimed, " It has all gone wrong again, sir ; it has all gone wrong."

" Why, what, in Heaven's name, is the matter now, Jerome ?" I demanded. " When I left you, all bade fair to continue tranquil and at peace."

" Ay ! but there is some demon of mischief at work in the house," replied the old man, " whose machinations we don't understand."

My lord is a thousand times worse than ever. Indeed he hardly appears to me to be sane."

This news, as it may well be supposed, grieved me deeply; but, of course, my first thought was to discover the origin of the change that had taken place, in order, if possible, to counteract any evil that might have been produced either by accident or by design. "Tell me, good Jerome," I said, as the old man was going on with desultory lamentations and vague facts, "tell me exactly what has occurred since I went away, step by step, as nearly as you can remember it."

"Why, my son," he replied, "I have very little to tell, except what I have before said, that my lord seems nearly insane. However, let me see! The only thing that occurred worth noticing the day after you went away was, that, in returning from Juvigny, where I had been visiting my nephew, late in the evening, I found Master Gaspard and Madame Suzette, my lady's maid, in one of the alleys of the park a great deal more intimate than I liked. I had seen something of the same kind before at the

Prés Vallée ; and then, though I did not choose to show myself in the matter, I took good care that my lady should know what was going on ; and I know that she scolded Suzette severely, and threatened to discharge her if she behaved so lightly. However, there they were again, walking along together, certainly more like two lovers than a page of good birth and a lady's tiring woman ought to be. Coming upon them suddenly, I passed by without their well seeing who I was ; but I heard him say to her, speaking of some one else, ' Oh ! he would take fire at it in a minute ; any thing of that kind would do very well.' This time I thought it my bounden duty to tell my lady myself what I had seen, and she was very angry indeed. The morning after that, as I was just going up the great staircase, I heard a terrible noise in my mistress's dressing-room, and the next moment my master passed me like a madman ; while I saw Lise, the other maid, running out of my mistress's room as if for help. The moment she set eyes upon me, she called me to come up and help her ; and I found my mistress lying

upon the floor of her dressing-room, as if she were dead; while beside her there was a large roll of bright blue riband, which seemed to have fallen out of her hand. While we were lifting her up to put her on the couch, my lord rushed in again, and, giving a glance at her as if she had been a viper, snatched up the riband, and left us to bring her to herself as we best could. She did not recover for some time; and I thought it but right to call the doctor, who kept her to her bed all that day. In the meanwhile I asked Lise to explain the cause of all this discomfort; and she told me that she knew but little, not having heard all that passed between my lady and my lord. When first she went in to her mistress's dressing-room, she said, she found Suzette persuading her mistress to have her white mantle trimmed with that blue riband; and, though her mistress said it would look ugly, still she held it in her hand. In a minute or two afterwards, Suzette went away, and the Duchess asked Lise whether she thought the riband would look well on the mantle. Just while they were speaking, in

came my lord, and Lise went on into the bedroom beyond; but, in a moment after she heard a word or two about the riband, and my lord gave my lady some hard names which she would not repeat. Hearing some one fall, she ran in, she said, to see, and found the Duchess as I have told you she was when I came there. Ever since that time my lord has been like one distracted; and though he saw his wife yesterday, he spoke not a word to her, but all the time he was in the room he continued playing with the curls of Mademoiselle's hair, and thinking of something else."

Although I saw more deeply into the mystery than good old Jerome Laborde, and felt afraid, indeed, that he himself might unintentionally have contributed to bring about the change that we both deplored, yet there were many points of the whole business still dark and obscure even to myself. That the discovery of a riband in the hands of his wife, of the same colour, and probably the same shade, as that which suspended the locket to the neck of the unfortunate Count de Mesnil, had revived in the mind of Monsieur

de Villardin, with more tremendous force than ever, those suspicions which the exhortations of Father Ferdinand and my own direct testimony to the Duchess's conduct had crushed with difficulty, I did not in the least doubt. Nor had I more hesitation in concluding that Gaspard's hatred of myself, and desire to supplant me in the confidence of Monsieur de Villardin, together with the offence which the Duchess's rebuke in regard to the page had given Suzette, were sufficient motives for the lovers, or paramours, or whatever they might be, to combine in fostering the suspicions of Monsieur de Villardin against his wife, and thus revenging themselves upon her while they rendered themselves agreeable to him. But how they came by the knowledge necessary to make such schemes effectual was, I confess, a wonder to me. Could Monsieur de Villardin, I asked myself, could he have been weak enough to confide in Gaspard de Belleville the secret of his encounter with the Count de Mesnil, and the discovery of the locket and its contents? or could either Gaspard or Suzette have watched

our proceedings on that occasion, or have overheard any of the conversations relating to it, which had taken place between myself and the Duke ? The first supposition I rejected at once, for it was impossible to believe that Monsieur de Villardin would trust to the ear of one, whom he himself suspected of having betrayed his confidence in former instances, a secret which, from the concealment and privacy that had attended the duel, might, in all probability, involve his own life. Neither could I, in calling to mind with the most scrupulous accuracy every circumstance relating to the transaction, believe that we had either been watched, or that any of our words had been overheard. The spot where the duel had taken place was so remote and private, every thing in the house had been so much in its usual train when we returned, that, certainly, no one could have followed us from the château to the place of combat; and any conversations that had taken place upon the subject afterwards had always been carried on in low tones, and in places where it was almost impossible that they could be overheard.

All this perplexed me greatly ; and, although good Jerome Laborde pressed eagerly for my opinion, I could neither give him insight into the past, nor advice concerning the future. All that I could suggest was, that, with the very first opportunity, he should send off notice of what had occurred to Father Ferdinand, who might boldly originate the subject in conversation with the Duke, without waiting till he was addressed upon it. This, of course, neither Jerome Laborde nor I dared attempt ; though we naturally determined to do our best, should the occasion of serving the unhappy Duchess present itself.

The means of sending off speedily to Father Ferdinand were, luckily, found without difficulty ; for, though we could not risk despatching a servant to him from the château, yet Jerome saw that another messenger might be procured by the intervention of Jacques Marlot.

Under these circumstances, I determined to write to the priest myself ; and, having done so, I committed the letter to the hands of the good major-domo, who undertook that it should

go, at the latest, the next morning. All this occupied some time, and it was now growing late; but yet the Duke had not returned. Another hour elapsed; supper-time arrived; and, although one of the most regular men in his habits that I ever saw, still Monsieur de Villardin did not appear. The whole household became alarmed; and Madame de Villardin herself, whom some one foolishly informed of the facts, gave herself completely up to terror; and, weeping bitterly, came down to the hall in order to send out people to seek for her husband. At that moment, however, Monsieur de Villardin's step was heard in the vestibule; and immediately afterwards he entered the hall.

He took but little notice of his wife, merely asking, "Why are you weeping, madam?" and after her reply, that she was apprehensive for his safety, he cast down his eyes and stood musing, in the middle of the hall, for two or three minutes, which seemed perfect ages to those who were the spectators of so painful a scene. Then, starting suddenly, he looked round frowningly upon myself and seve-

ral of the servants who were gazing upon him in surprise and sorrow, and sat down to table unwashed, and in his dusty dress.

He seemed, however, by this time to have recovered some kind of command over his demeanour, and appeared eager to prevent the servants, whose astonishment he saw that he had excited, from remarking that there was any thing in his behaviour different from his ordinary habits. He spoke to Madame de Villardin frequently during supper, to which she sat down with him, using, as he addressed her, all those forms of cold courtesy and politeness, which none knew better how to employ than himself. To me, also, he spoke once or twice concerning my late expedition; and evidently strove, with a desperate effort, to appear attentive to my replies. It was in vain, however, that he did so; for he continually relapsed into deep thought, every two or three minutes rousing himself violently from his reveries, and then falling back again, whether he would or not, into a state of dreary abstraction.

The next morning, a new change seemed

to have taken place in his mood, for he came down perfectly himself, collected, and firm. He was quick and stern, it is true, but that was a frame of mind in which we had all often remarked him, and thought there was now, perhaps, something more approaching towards fierceness in his manner than we had ever beheld; yet this demeanour was so much better than the state of the preceding evening, that it appeared a relief.

Several times during the course of the morning I hoped that he was going to speak to me on the subject of his new suspicions, for more than once he looked earnestly, I may call it wildly, in my face; and once, when he had done so during a longer space than ever, he suddenly broke off, and turned away, muttering, "No, no! myself alone!"

I eagerly watched his conduct to Madame de Villardin during dinner, and saw that it was certainly very different from that of the night before — keen and rapid, but no longer harsh and abstracted. Yet though the Duchess herself seemed delighted with the change, and

did all she could to soften him still farther, there appeared to me something not natural in his manner, which alarmed me; and I determined to walk down to Juvigny in order to make sure that the letter had been despatched to Father Ferdinand, for whose coming I prayed more fervently than I had ever done for the presence of any other man in my life. The reply was satisfactory — a messenger having been sent off to Rennes at an early hour; and I felt certain, though it might be late the next day before the Confessor could arrive, that he would not suffer two suns to rise ere he was in the château.

So far relieved was the mind of Madame de Villardin by the alteration in her husband's conduct, which, she apparently trusted would now return to its ordinary course, that she began to resume her usual habits; and, accompanied by her little girl, took her stated walk in the cool of the evening; for it was now the month of May, and as warm as June. The Duke was shut up in his library all day, and, I supposed, alone; but in descending the back

staircase, — which leading from my apartments in the wing, passed one of the library doors, and thence to the court behind the château, — I encountered Suzette, the Duchess's woman, coming out from a conference with Monsieur de Villardin ; and I felt sure, from that moment, that no internal change of feeling had taken place in his bosom, though he might assume, by a great effort, a different demeanour to those around him. To the hour of supper he was this night exact ; and though his conversation was evidently forced, and, perhaps, a little rambling, yet it was fluent and courteous.

After supper, I, as usual, retired to my own apartments, and, full of painful thoughts turned to the window, and gazed out upon the park as it lay before me, sleeping in the calm moonlight. I had not been there a moment, when a figure appeared upon the terrace, which I instantly recognised as that of Monsieur de Villardin. With a quick and irregular pace he descended the flight of steps that led into the garden, crossed it towards the park, and in a minute after was lost to my view in one of the dark

alleys. Never did I feel so tempted to play the spy ; but, though I was conscious that the motive was not an evil one, yet my mind revolted from the thought, and, casting off my clothes, I went to bed.

The next morning and day passed much in the same manner ; but, about half an hour before dusk, while Madame de Villardin was preparing for her evening walk, the Duke himself set out on foot before her, saying to his wife, as he left the saloon, in which I happened to be at the time, " As you are not going to take Laura with you to-night, if you come down the walk by the water side, I will meet you. Our young friend here will accompany you ! "

Madame de Villardin's joy at these words almost overflowed at her eyes ; and, though she had never said she was not about to take her little girl with her as the Duke implied, yet she determined to follow his words exactly, and, leaving Mademoiselle to play in the flower-garden, under the superintendence of Suzette, she set out about ten minutes after her husband, accompanied by myself alone. She walked

but slowly, and rested about half way down the walk; but although the sun was below the horizon, and the light was growing faint, yet the air was so warm and the sky so clear, one could have walked on for hours with far more pleasure than in the full glare of day.

Ere we had again proceeded a dozen yards, we saw Monsieur de Villardin come into the alley as if from the bank of the river; and, offering his arm to his wife, he took the garden-seat which I was carrying and walked on down the alley in silence. A minute or two after, however, as we approached one of the little wooden bridges, he paused, and asked Madame de Villardin whether she was able to walk on a little further on the other side of the river. "I have just now seen a wounded chevreuil," he said, "and wish to put it out of its agony;" and then turning to me, he bade me run back to the house, and bring his carbine, which I should find charged in his dressing-room.

His voice faltered, I observed, as he spoke, and the moment he had done, he turned towards the little bridge which might lie at about fifty

or sixty yards from the spot where we stood. A feeling of awe and agitation came over me not to be described, for I had a sort of instant conviction that all was not right; and, though I took a few steps towards the château, I paused again almost immediately, not knowing how to act or what to do. Never in my existence did I feel such a painful state of uncertainty; and, gazing after Monsieur de Villardin and his fair wife, as they advanced slowly towards the bridge, my mind in a moment ran over a thousand vague apprehensions, probable and improbable, which only left the conviction that something fearful was about to occur, though of what nature I could not divine.

“His carbine!” I thought, “long before I can get back, it will be too dark for him to shoot any thing thirty yards from him!” and I resolved to follow, and, pretending I had forgotten what he had said, to ask where the weapon was to be found. When I turned,—though, as I have said, it was quite dusk,—I could see the figures of Monsieur and Madame de Villardin approaching the river; and, walking fast to come up with

them, I was within twenty yards of the bridge when they began to cross it. Scarcely, however, had they taken two steps upon the wood-work when I heard a crash, a scream, a plunge, and both figures at once disappeared.

I darted forward to the spot where the bridge had stood, but nothing now remained of it but some broken fragments attached to the piles, which, driven into the high bank, had served as the foundation. The growing obscurity of the twilight, the trees that overhung the banks, the height of the banks themselves, which at that spot rose full twenty feet above the stream, the rushing and rippling of the current, which, there, considerably confined by its bed, hurried on towards a sharp turn which it took about fifty yards below,—all served to prevent me seeing distinctly what were the objects on the surface of the water. Fragments of the bridge there certainly were ; but I saw neither Madame de Villardin nor her husband, though the whirling of a part of the wood-work in one of the eddies of the river made me for a moment think I beheld the struggles of a living creature. I

paused but for a single instant to calculate what were best to do; and then, seeing that there was nothing else to be done, I leapt from the high bank at once into the stream, and, as soon as I rose after the first plunge, I struck rapidly down the current, in order, by exceeding its own speed, to come up with whatever objects it was carrying down. Almost at the turn of the river, where the water in circling round the point, drifted strongly against the bank, which was here again less steep, at least on one side, I saw, amongst some broken pieces of wood, a larger object, impeded in its course down the stream by some projecting stones and roots of trees, and the next moment I grasped the arm of Monsieur de Villardin. He seemed perfectly insensible; but, springing to the shore, I dragged him up the bank, and laid him upon the turf. Still he made no movement: but, as I confess, that from various feelings which I need not explain, I felt more interested in the fate of Madame de Villardin than even in his own, I left him at once, and, again

plunging into the stream, I swam rapidly round the little peninsula I have mentioned.

The river here was more open, and whatever light was in the sky was reflected clearly from its bosom; but, by this time, all the fragments of the bridge had drifted out of sight, and, in vain lifting my head as high as I could, I attempted to discover any object floating upon the water. Still darting on as fast as my utmost efforts could impel me along the current, I endeavoured to regain the time lost in drawing Monsieur de Villardin on shore; and, after a moment, a faint and very distant cry for help caught my ear and encouraged me to strike on. The cry, however, was never repeated; and, after swimming till I was perfectly exhausted, I was obliged to abandon the attempt in despair, and landed about a mile below the dwelling of good Jacques Marlot. Thither I directed my steps as fast as possible; and, finding the door locked, I knocked for several moments so violently as to bring him himself, with a face of terror, to the gateway. Telling him what had occurred, I besought him

to rouse all the servants of the farm and the cotters in the neighbourhood, and, dividing into two parties, one on either bank, to search the whole course of the stream with torches and lanterns;

In the meanwhile I hurried back, and calling the woodcutter at the nearest gate of the park, made him hasten on with me to the spot where I had left Monsieur de Villardin, answering as well as I could the eager questions which he put to me, as we went, concerning the events which had occurred.

We found the Duke exactly where I had left him; but, though he had not moved in the slightest degree, it was evident that he was still alive, for he was breathing loud and hard, like a person in a deep sleep. Taking him up in our arms, we carried him as quickly as we could to the château, when we were instantly surrounded by the whole household; and by the lights which were now brought, we perceived that a severe blow on the head was more probably the cause of his insensibility than the short time he had remained in the water.

Leaving him in the hands of the physician, who, for the last month, had inhabited the château, attending upon Madame de Villardin, I set out, with the greater part of the household, all furnished with torches; and, for three hours, continued our search for the body of the unhappy lady, from the spot where the bridge had broken to a village nearly six miles further down the stream. Our search, however, was in vain; and all feeling that a good mistress, a kind friend, and a gentle lady, was lost to us for ever, we returned sad and sorrowful to the château.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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